

A sticky end to varicose veins?

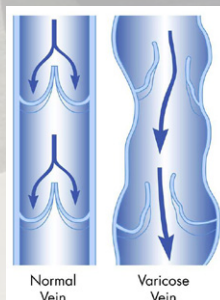
MR SUDIP RAY, a vascular specialist in London and the Channel Islands, answered questions for Guernsey Now about varicose veins, which affect around 25% of the population, and his new keyhole glue procedure called Venaseal

What are varicose veins?

Varicose veins are easily recognised as bluish worm-like cords around the thigh, knee and calf. They are essentially surface veins that have become baggy and are often worse after standing or exercise. Although they are often perceived to be just a cosmetic problem, they are the leading cause of leg ulcers in the western world.

What causes them?

Varicose disease is usually caused by faulty valves in a large thigh or calf vein which pressurises nearby surface veins causing them to enlarge and bulge underneath the skin (shown in the diagram). They are more common following



pregnancies due to the massive increase in blood circulating around the baby as well as hormonal changes which weaken the vein walls. They seem to be commoner in occupations associated with prolonged standing and there may also be a genetic predisposition, explaining why varicose veins sometimes 'run in the family'.

What symptoms do varicose veins produce?

They may cause no symptoms in the early stages but, if advanced, may cause discomfort, aching or feelings of heaviness, especially towards the end of the day. Occasionally the veins become hard and inflamed (known as phlebitis), itch or bleed. If severe and untreated they may produce pigmentation, eczema or even ankle ulceration.

Do they cause deep vein thrombosis (DVT) after flying or long journeys?

No, although the veins may be more uncomfortable at these times, actual flight-induced DVTs are quite rare. Statistically a fit traveller would have to fly long-haul every day for 15 years to get one.

How does one know whether they should have treatment?

The cause of the varicose veins can be determined by a safe and painless ultrasound examination (see above right). This provides a detailed map for the specialist to analyse and gives an indication as to whether they will get worse in the future.

How can they be treated?

Temporary relief from aching or swelling may be gained by wearing elastic support stockings. However, if the veins are large or unsightly then it is better to consider definitive treatment using one of the keyhole thermal procedures now available in specialist clinics.



A patient having an ultrasound examination.

How do the keyhole procedures work?

The faulty vein inside the leg can be closed using heat energy from either a laser or radiofrequency generator. This can be performed under a simple local anaesthetic (see photos) and most patients walk out a few minutes later. The results are apparent within a couple of weeks, although we advise patients to allow a month or so before showing their legs off on holiday!

Do you ever have to perform surgical 'stripping' of veins?

No, in our experience the keyhole procedures can be performed in nearly all cases and is far more preferable to stripping, which requires a full anaesthetic. In addition, our patients resume normal activities immediately and are less likely to have veins returning in the future. We perform



Sudip Ray's Venaseal gun.

around 300 keyhole procedures each year and haven't stripped since 2008!

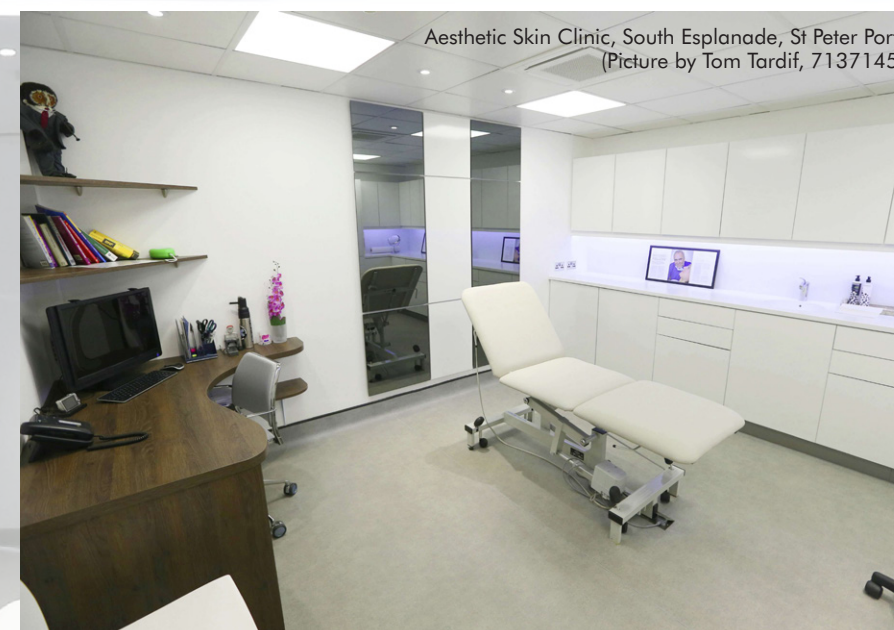
Tell us about your Venaseal procedure

We are now using an injection-free procedure where the faulty vein can be sealed off using a bioadhesive glue similar to that used to close skin cuts in children. It comes out of a readymade handgun (see below left) and its American inventor had the procedure performed on himself to check its reliability! Having seen the impressive results from around the world we have been using it in London and are delighted to now offer it to suitable clients in the Channel Islands.

Where do you work locally?

I consult from the Aesthetic Skin Clinic in South Esplanade, St Peter Port, and have a fantastic team based there. The new treatment room is perfect for some of the keyhole vein procedures and clients can pop over to see us in Jersey or London too.

Sudip Ray MA MS FRCS is a consultant vascular surgeon at Parkside Hospital London, the Surgical Suite Jersey and the Aesthetic Skin Clinic in Guernsey. For more information and to book appointments, visit www.endovein.co.uk or call 020 3000 6900 or 736699.



Aesthetic Skin Clinic, South Esplanade, St Peter Port. (Picture by Tom Tardif, 7137145)



Varicose veins outlined before keyhole treatment.



Varicose veins after keyhole treatment.



Patient having keyhole vein procedure under local anaesthetic.



Aesthetic Skin Clinic, South Esplanade, St Peter Port. (Picture by Tom Tardif, 7137154)



Sudip Ray uses keyhole surgery and Venaseal to remove varicose veins.