

Patient Information Leaflet

## Undergoing Duplex Ultrasound To Investigate Varicose Veins

Produced By: Diagnostic Imaging

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## **Why am I having this scan?**

Your doctor/consultant has referred you for this investigation as you may be having problems with the veins in your legs. The scan is used to assess the veins and identify the problem areas.

Ultrasound is a safe, non-invasive technique that

- uses no needles or drugs
- uses no x-rays or any harmful radiation
- is done as an out-patient

## **How is the scan done?**

It is suggested for your own comfort during the procedure you consider wearing a two-piece outfit e.g. skirt/trousers and top.

You will be asked to remove trousers/skirt, socks/tights and shoes once you are in the scan room. The scan is performed with the patient standing so that the veins are more dilated and easier to assess.

Some gel is put on the skin and the ultrasound probe is then placed on this.

The Sonographer (specialist ultrasound radiographer) will squeeze the leg muscle at intervals during the examination to make the blood flow in the veins so they can be assessed. When the squeeze is released the pressure eases and the veins open up, the blood is allowed to fall back down the leg if the valves are not able to prevent it. This is called venous "reflux". Venous reflux is the major cause of most venous diseases and is almost always the cause of varicose veins.

The scan starts with you standing facing the Sonographer to assess the thigh veins. You will then be asked to stand on a step with your back to the Sonographer so that the veins behind the knee can be assessed. Finally you will be asked to sit on the scan couch with your legs over the side so that the calf veins can be assessed. The whole scan may take up to 30 minutes per leg.

## **Is it painful?**

You should not experience any pain, however, it is necessary for the Sonographer to press firmly on the skin at intervals during the examination. If this is at all painful you must inform the Sonographer.

## **What can the scan show?**

The picture produced by the ultrasound machine is basically black and white. However, we can use colour to detect any movement of blood within the veins. This is usually red or blue, depending on the direction that the blood is flowing. The direction of flow is important in helping us decide which veins are working properly.

The Sonographer who performs the scan can see both the veins themselves and the blood flowing within them during the scan. The scan cannot show the valves, but by seeing how the

blood flows, the Sonographer can tell if they are working or not. When the valves in a vein do not work reflux is seen and the veins are called "incompetent".

### **What happens after the scan?**

The surgeon needs to know which veins have abnormal valves and whereabouts those veins are in the leg. This allows the surgeon to plan accurate surgery using the information obtained from the scan.

The information obtained from Duplex ultrasound examination of each of the veins in the leg is then put into a written report and is sent back to the Doctor who requested it. You will receive an appointment in due course to go and see the Doctor again in the out patient clinic, to discuss the results of the scan.

### **Are there any risks involved?**

There are no known risks associated with ultrasound scanning of the veins.

### **Finally**

If you have any questions or concerns that you would like answered, please contact;

(01983) 534666 Monday to Friday  
09:00-12:30 and 13:30-16:30

Ask to speak to a Senior Radiographer in Diagnostic Imaging

### **Access to Health Records by Diagnostic Staff**

As a patient undergoing tests as part of a diagnostic procedure information about you may be accessed by other healthcare professionals. It is normal practice in these circumstances for your consent to be implied as part of your agreement to have the test or tests performed.

### **Accidental over exposure of radiation**

Despite all safeguards, medical exposures can occur where the actual dose is greater than was intended. The regulations governing these exposures are either IR(ME)R 2000 or IRR 99. In the event of an over exposure the incident will be reported to the Radiation Protection Advisor. It will be down to the discretion of the RPA as to whether there is a clinical requirement to inform any patient of an overexposure.

**If you require this leaflet in another language, large print or another format, please contact the Quality Team, telephone 01983 534850, who will advise you.**

Valuables should not be brought into the hospital. If patients have to bring in valuable items they should ask a nurse to store them safely and request a receipt for the items. You may not be able to have the valuable items returned if the time of discharge from hospital is out of hours.

We are sorry but the Trust cannot accept responsibility for loss or damage to items not given for safe keeping.

You can get further information on all sorts of health issues through NHS interactive available through Sky TV or online at: <http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk/>

For Health advice and out of hours GP service please call the NHS 111 service on: 111

### **We Value Your Views On Our Service**

If you wish to comment on the care which you, your relative or friend has received, we will be pleased to hear from you. Please speak to the person in charge of the ward, clinic or service in the first instance or ask them to contact the Quality Team. If you wish to contact them directly, telephone on 534850.

Alternatively you may prefer to write to:

Chief Executive  
Isle Of Wight NHS Trust  
St Mary's Hospital  
Newport  
Isle of Wight  
PO30 5TG

All NHS sites are no smoking areas.

If you would like help and advice to stop smoking please call: Freephone 0800 169 0 169 to talk to the NHS Smoking Helpline.

Ref: **DI/DUS/7**