



RADIOFREQUENCY ABLATION (RFA) FOR VARICOSE VEINS

What is Radiofrequency Ablation (RFA)?

Radiofrequency Ablation (RFA) is one of the most effective modern treatments for varicose veins. It is a minimally invasive procedure that uses heat generated by radiofrequency energy to close faulty veins, allowing blood to flow through healthy veins instead.

RFA is performed through a tiny puncture in the skin using ultrasound guidance. There are no large incisions, resulting in minimal scarring, less discomfort, and a quicker recovery compared with traditional vein surgery.

What are varicose veins?

Varicose veins occur when the valves inside your leg veins stop working properly. Instead of flowing back towards the heart, blood pools within the vein, causing it to enlarge, twist, and become visible beneath the skin.

Varicose veins are common and may worsen over time if left untreated.

Symptoms of varicose veins

- Aching or heavy legs
- Throbbing or burning discomfort
- Swollen ankles
- Itching around the veins
- Night cramps
- Restless legs
- Skin discolouration
- Varicose eczema
- Bleeding from varicose veins
- Superficial thrombophlebitis (inflamed veins)
- Leg ulcers in more advanced cases

Am I suitable for RFA?

Most patients with varicose veins are assessed using a duplex ultrasound scan to determine whether RFA is the most appropriate treatment.

Your vascular specialist will discuss your symptoms, medical history, and scan results before recommending the best treatment option.

Your procedure

RFA is usually performed under local anaesthetic as a day-case procedure. During treatment:

- Your leg is cleaned and prepared.
- Ultrasound is used to identify the affected vein.
- A small catheter is inserted into the vein through a tiny skin puncture.
- Local anaesthetic is placed around the vein.
- Radiofrequency energy gently heats and seals the vein.
- Blood is naturally redirected into healthy veins.

Most procedures take approximately 30–60 minutes, depending on the extent of the veins being treated.

After the procedure

Following treatment, you will:

- Walk immediately after the procedure.
- Wear compression stockings as advised.
- Return home the same day.
- Be encouraged to stay active with regular walking.

For the first one to two weeks:

- Walk every day.
- Avoid prolonged standing or sitting.
- Avoid strenuous exercise and heavy lifting.
- Keep well hydrated.

Benefits of RFA

Radiofrequency Ablation offers many advantages:

- Excellent long-term success rates
- Minimally invasive treatment
- Local anaesthetic only in most cases
- Little or no scarring
- Less bruising and discomfort than traditional surgery
- Quick recovery
- Same-day treatment
- Rapid return to normal activities
- Improved appearance of the legs
- Relief from pain, heaviness, swelling, and other symptoms

Possible risks and complications

All medical procedures carry some risk, although serious complications are uncommon.

Possible side effects include:

- Mild pain or tenderness
- Bruising

- Temporary swelling
- Tightness along the treated vein
- Temporary numbness
- Inflammation of the treated vein (phlebitis)

Less common risks include:

- Infection
- Skin pigmentation changes
- Skin burns
- Blood clot (Deep Vein Thrombosis)
- Pulmonary Embolism (very rare)
- Nerve injury (very rare)
- Recurrence of varicose veins over time

Your consultant will discuss these risks with you before treatment and answer any questions you may have.

Recovery

Most patients:

- Return to office-based work within **1–3 days**
- Resume normal daily activities almost immediately
- Return to exercise after approximately **2 weeks**
- Notice continued improvement over several weeks as the treated vein is naturally absorbed by the body

Driving

You should avoid driving on the day of your procedure.

You may resume driving once you feel comfortable, can safely perform an emergency stop, and are no longer limited by discomfort.

Flying

Where possible, avoid long-haul flights for approximately **four weeks** after treatment.

If travel is unavoidable, please discuss this with your consultant before your procedure.

Alternatives to RFA

Depending on your individual condition, alternative treatments may include:

- Compression stockings
- Ultrasound-guided foam sclerotherapy
- Endovenous laser treatment (EVLT)
- Surgical treatment (vein stripping and phlebectomy)

Your consultant will recommend the most suitable option for your veins.

When should I seek medical advice?

Please contact us immediately or seek urgent medical attention if you develop:

- Increasing leg swelling
- Severe calf pain
- Excessive redness or discharge from the treatment site

- Fever
- Chest pain
- Shortness of breath
- Coughing up blood

These symptoms are uncommon but require prompt assessment.

Follow-up

A follow-up appointment and ultrasound scan may be arranged to assess your recovery and treatment outcome.

If you have any concerns before your scheduled review, please contact the clinic.

Questions?

Our team is happy to answer any questions before or after your treatment.

Please contact the clinic if you require further advice or would like to arrange a consultation with one of our vascular specialists.