



Lowe Plastic Surgery (LPS)

Dr. Lowe's Facts about Laser Leg Vein Treatment

Will my leg veins improve?

Leg vein treatment can be performed using a variety of techniques that include: surgery, chemicals, electro-cautery, or lasers. Laser vein treatment involves often expensive technology, and it can be unpredictable and time consuming. Most of the lack of predictability with laser vein removal is the size and location of the vein itself. What is the size of the vein? How deep is the vein from the surface of the skin? Most discontent with laser vein treatment relates to the cost, discomfort, and time associated with laser treatments. Different lasers are required based on the veins size and location and the patient's skin type. Smaller and superficial leg veins are usually the easiest to treat. The vast majority of leg veins take 3-5 treatments to improve by 80%. The laser focuses on thermal disruption of the area treated multiple times. Most patients are impressed with the results but not with the discomfort associated with effective treatment.

How effective are over-the-counter remedies?

No over the counter remedies are effective at removing leg veins that have been present for some time. Medically prescribed topical skin regimens are usually ineffective as well. Many patients attempt to treat leg veins on their own, but very few patients see any noticeable improvement. Patients are best served to save their money for professional treatment with surgery or laser. Most topical skin programs include a skin lightener (Hydroquinone) which may lighten skin color by 5-10%. Almost no over-the-counter treatment can provide effective dosing without a physician prescription or supervision. Your physician or health care professional can help you develop a legitimate treatment that is right for you.

What do you think about sclera-therapy or skin injections?

Minimally invasive procedures can be associated with excellent results. These procedures are usually quite safe when performed by a professional. Most patients report improvements in the smaller veins with multiple applications. It is difficult to know how many injection treatments it would take to equal a standard laser treatment. Sclera-therapy is best performed after a topical numbing cream has been applied 1 hour in advance. Dr. Lowe is committed to a true clinically effective leg vein treatment such as laser and sclera-therapy when indicated, and leaves the feel good treatments to the medical spas and aestheticians.

What is the best laser for leg vein treatment?

There are a number of lasers that are popular in laser leg vein treatment. The most popular device for smaller leg veins is the ND-Yag laser. The laser penetrates the skin, raising the temperature of the blood vessel and safely coagulating it. Treated veins gradually shrink and become less visible or disappear altogether. Laser leg vein treatment is associated with significant discomfort, but limited recovery. Some patients require local anesthetic and pain medication before or after treatment. No laser leg vein treatment is effective with only one treatment. Most patient results are improved by wearing support hose for several weeks. The cost of laser usually depends on number of pulses or the areas treated. .

Are there substantial risks related to laser leg vein treatment?

All laser procedures are associated with a certain amount of risk. The risks are often associated with a patient's skin color or consistency. Darker skin types are at a higher risk of scarring and hypopigmentation (white spots). All laser procedures must be adjusted and formulated appropriately for skin types. The risk of laser leg vein treatment include: poor aesthetic results, pain, bruising, swelling, crusting, hyperpigmentation, and scarring. The deeper the laser treatment, the higher the risk. The deeper and more aggressive the laser treatment, the more effective the results in most cases. Laser leg vein treatment is always a balance between "pain & gain." Your board certified plastic surgeon or dermatologist can assist you with choosing the treatment that is right for you.

Is laser leg vein treatment painful or time consuming?

Laser leg vein treatment is usually performed in the office with topical numbing cream. A limited number of patients require sedation in advance with a medication by mouth. The skin surface is treated quickly with small burst of intense laser light. A complete treatment usually requires 5-10 minutes per area to complete. Icing the area before and after the procedure is usually required. Most patients find the treatment to be uncomfortable but tolerable even with 1-2 passes over the skin. Patient should expect to experience red and crusting skin for 10-14 days in most cases, but results can vary with skin type. Most patients undergo 2-5 treatments sessions at one to two month intervals.

How much improvement can I expect with each laser treatment?

Laser vein treatment requires 2-5 treatments over the course of several months. It is one of the best options for small leg vein treatment because it can usually be worked into a person's busy schedule. It is not a treatment that will go noticed by friends and co-workers due to its location. The treated area will usually be quite red and bruised for several days.. Even with this recovery, patients should only expect about a 30-40 percent improvement in the leg vein color and quality per treatment. Laser leg vein treatment will in no way provide instant results regardless of what anyone may claim or advertise. Nevertheless, it will in most cases improve certain leg veins not responsive to other treatments. The manufacture recommends up to 5 treatments spaced over two to four months for the best results.

How much does laser leg vein treatment cost?

Laser leg vein treatment involves complex laser technology. There are a variety of laser manufacturers that sell these devices. The cost to purchase a fully functional laser device is about 80-100K. Dr. Lowe usually leases the lasers in his practice. This ensures in most cases that the lasers are properly maintained, a laser technician is on site, and that patients have access to current technology. In most cases, approximately half the laser fee goes to pay for the laser lease and the other is profit. The cost of laser is determined by time, location, and complexity of treatment. Some leg veins simply do not respond to laser treatment and other options will need to be explored in these cases. The practice will be able to provide you with the cost of laser leg vein treatment after your professional consultation.

When do you offer laser leg vein treatment?

All patients considering laser treatment are required to see Dr. Lowe in consultation prior to the laser treatment. Some patient may not schedule a laser treatment for several weeks after consultation depending on their schedule or time of year. Our practice provides laser procedures at set time points throughout the calendar month. We usually perform laser treatments on Wednesday mornings every 2-3 weeks depending on demand. We will often open extra laser treatment days as demand increases. Patients may check with our office for the laser dates that are currently available. Some leg veins require special laser arrangements.

Can laser leg vein treatment be combined with other nonsurgical procedures?

Laser leg vein treatment is often combined with other cosmetic treatments. Some patients undergo sclerotherapy on the same day as the laser leg vein treatment. Additional laser treatments such as Intense Pulse Light (IPL) or resurfacing can be used on occasion to improve the results. Other lasers such as the V-Beam (PDL) can often be added to limited areas without substantial additional risk. Most tattoo treatments require aggressive management that limits other treatment options. Some patients undergo BOTOX application on the same day as laser treatment when scheduled in advance. However, more lengthy cosmetic procedures such as injectable fillers (i.e. Juvederm) usually cannot be performed on the same day due to time limitations or safety concerns. Laser treatments must be performed efficiently and properly on laser days to ensure the most cost effective and safe patient care. Patients who are interested in doing more than one cosmetic treatment on the day of laser resurfacing are encouraged to check with our office in advance.

What is the downtime related to laser leg vein treatment?

In our practice, Laser leg vein treatment is performed by the physician. Dr. Lowe is committed to providing patients with an effective and safe laser treatment. The downtime associated with the typical treatment is 5-7 days or longer. The patients are often able to return to work the same day or the day after as long as they are aware that the treatment will be obvious in some locations. Most patients are comfortable to resume normal exercise after several days with full healing taking up to 2-3 weeks in most cases. Every patient has different skin and different expectations or definitions about down-time. Patients should undergo laser at least 2 weeks prior to a major event such as a wedding or anniversary. A patient may elect to have a more or less aggressive treatment based on their clinical or social situation. Dr. Lowe and our staff can provide you with further information about downtime and recovery during your laser consultation.

Is laser leg vein treatment right for me?

In most cases, laser leg vein treatment is not something that a patient needs; it is something a patient wants. There is a financial and personal cost for patients who desire tattoo removal. There are a variety of options to treat leg veins depending on their size, depth, and location. These include electro-cautery, surgery, sclera-therapy, and laser treatments to name just a few. Laser leg vein treatment will provide modest results at a limited cost over time. The treatment regimen is not associated with undue risk in most cases. Most appropriate patients undergo 2-3 treatments in our practice with yearly maintenance which is a testament to its effectiveness. No cosmetic procedure is without risk or cost, but laser leg vein treatment is popular because it seems to be the best option in most cases. Patients should carefully weigh the pros and cons of laser before scheduling the procedure. Each patient leg veins are unique, a consultation with a Board Certified Plastic Surgeon or Dermatologist can help you determine what options best suite your situation and pocket book. Laser leg vein treatment is often the right thing for the right person. For further information check out our website or other helpful links at www.drjlowe.com

What are Dr. Lowe's take home points?

1. The success of laser leg vein treatment depends on the most on the size, depth, and location.
2. Understand risks (poor results, pain, bruising, crusting, scaring, and residual brown spots).
3. Laser leg vein treatment will require 3-5 treatments in most cases.
4. Laser treatment can be adjusted to increase or decrease recovery and results.
5. Stacking treatments in at 1-2 month intervals is usually most effective.
6. The more aggressive the treatment the quicker the leg veins will fade.
7. Most patients tolerate laser leg vein treatment with topical numbing cream but it hurts.
8. Multiple passes performed on the same day improve the results for most patients.
9. Most patients will experience a residual brown spot that will require several months or more to resolve.
10. Physician certification and safety matters when undergoing any laser treatment.