

Questions?

Weekdays from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., call the Surgical Specialties Nurse Advice Line at 206-598-4549.

After hours and on weekends and holidays, call 206-598-6190 and ask for the resident on call for Vascular Surgery to be paged.

Or, ask for your surgeon to be paged:

Dr. _____

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON
MEDICAL CENTER
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Surgical Specialties Center

Box 356165
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206-598-4477



Varicose Vein Surgery

What to expect and how to prepare for your operation

Your legs have both deep and **superficial** (on the surface) veins that normally carry blood back to your heart. The superficial veins are just under your skin. When they become enlarged they are called **varicose veins**. These enlarged veins can cause symptoms such as aching and burning.

Varicose vein surgery is done both to remove and close off the abnormal veins so they will not cause any more symptoms.

This handout describes what to expect, how to prepare for your operation, and how to plan for your recovery.

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How to Prepare for Your Operation

Things to Remember

- Do **not** take any aspirin or aspirin-like products for 1 week before your operation, unless told to do so by your doctor. (See attached sheet.)
- Do not shave any part of your body that you do not already shave every day. If you normally shave near your surgical site, do **not** shave that area for 2 days (48 hours) before your surgery.
- You will likely go home the same day as your surgery. But, if both of your legs are being treated, you may spend 1 night in the hospital.
- You will not be able to drive for 24 hours after you leave the hospital. Arrange for someone to drive you home from the hospital, whether you go home the same day or the next day. You must also arrange for someone to stay with you for the first 24 hours you are home.
- **Arrival time:** The pre-surgery nurse will call you by 5 p.m. the night before your operation. If you are having surgery on a Monday, the nurse will call you the Friday before. If you do not hear from the pre-surgery nurse by 5 p.m., please call 206-598-6334.

Call the Nurse Advice Line or Your Doctor If You Have:

- A fever higher than 100.5°F (38°C).
- Chills or shaking.
- Any sign of infection in your incision:
 - Redness
 - Increased pain
 - Increased swelling
 - Foul-smelling drainage
- Openings in your incision.
- Nausea or you are throwing up.
- Concerns that cannot wait until your follow-up visit.

- Walking is good for you. Do not stand in the same position for more than 15 minutes.
- Do not lift anything heavier than a gallon of milk (about 10 pounds) for 1 week.
- At your first follow-up visit, your doctor will tell you when you can drive. Most people can drive 1 to 2 weeks after this surgery.

Pain Management

You will be given a prescription for pain medicine. Take this medicine the way it was prescribed.

The pre-surgery nurse will tell you when to come to the hospital and will remind you:

- Not to eat or drink after a certain time.
 - To have someone drive you home.
 - Which of your regular medicines to take or not take and to sip only enough water to swallow your pills.
- **Heating blanket:** To reduce your risk of infection, you will be covered with a heating blanket to warm your body while you wait to go into the operating room. Ask for a heating blanket if you do not receive one.

24 Hours Before Your Operation

- **Take 2 showers:** Take 1 shower the night before, and a second shower the morning of your operation. Use the antibacterial soap your nurse gave you to wash your body.

Do **not** use the antibacterial soap on your face and hair. (See directions that came with the soap.) Use your own soap and shampoo on your face and hair. Use clean towels to dry off, and put on clean clothing.

- **Medicines:** Take your medicines you were told to take. Sip only enough water to swallow your pills.

What to Expect After Your Operation

Precautions and Self-care to Speed Your Recovery

Medicine given during and after your operation will affect you. For 24 hours after your surgery, do **not**:

- Drive or travel alone.
- Use machinery.
- Drink alcohol.
- Sign any legal papers.
- Be responsible for the care of another person.

Incisions and Dressings

The location of your incisions depends on where your doctor has removed your vein. There will be stitches under your skin that will dissolve over time.

You will have plastic bandages or Band-aids covering your incisions. You can remove these bandages and any gauze dressings 72 hours after your operation.

You may have white tapes called *Steri-Strips* over your incisions. These will fall off in about 1 week. Remove them after 2 weeks if they are still on.

Drainage

You may have some drainage on your gauze dressing the first few days after your operation. You can change your gauze 2 times a day or when it becomes soiled. When the drainage stops, you no longer need the gauze.

Ace Wraps

You will have Ace wraps on your legs to ease swelling and pain. If the wraps get loose or wrinkled, you may re-wrap them:

- Start the wrap at the base of your toes.
- Wrap your foot and leg, overlapping the material as you move up your leg.

Wear Ace wraps for 72 hours after your surgery.

Bathing

- You may shower 72 hours after your operation.
- Do not take a bath, sit in a hot tub, or go swimming until your incisions are completely healed.

Activity After Your Operation

- For the first 4 to 5 days, keep your legs elevated 6 inches above the level of your heart when you are sitting or lying down.