



Making Veins Vanish

Heidi Hochman, pictured at her Mahjong table, was successfully treated for spider veins at Bassett.

No pain, no veins: Sclerotherapy eliminated Heidi Hochman's spider veins

Heidi Hochman of Halcottsville was reaching up to fix something on her ceiling when the chair she was standing on became unstable. She fell to the floor, but not before injuring the back of her knee on the top of the chair. The injured area, initially black and blue, later revealed unsightly veins and failed to heal properly.

"I really did a job on my veins," says Hochman, 71. "There was some pain, but mostly, the veins were just very ugly." She had developed spider veins, widened blood vessels close to the skin's surface that often look red, purple or blue. Hochman had experienced spider veins many years earlier, after pregnancy, and had them repaired with sclerotherapy. After her fall, Hochman contacted Bassett about undergoing the procedure for a second time.

What Is Sclerotherapy?

Sclerotherapy is a technique in which a medical professional injects a problem vein with a nontoxic substance, typically hypertonic saline, using a tiny needle. The outpatient procedure is performed in the exam room, does not require anesthesia and usually takes less than 30 minutes. Patients may return to normal activities, including work, soon after the procedure.

"Sclerotherapy patients are more often younger men or women, but more commonly women," explains

vascular surgeon Shelby Cooper, MD, associate chief of the Department of Surgery at Bassett Healthcare Network. "We see spider veins after pregnancy, with a family history or as a result of blood clots."

Pain-Free Procedure

"Dr. Cooper did a wonderful job," Hochman says. "I really had no pain with the procedure and my leg looks so much better now." Although some patients report no pain with the procedure, others experience a stinging sensation.

After the procedure, patients typically wear an elastic stocking and are asked to elevate the leg for a few days. Over time, most often within a few months, the unsightly veins fade and disappear. One sclerotherapy treatment may be a permanent fix; however, a large cluster of veins may require more than one injection. •

DO YOU HAVE SPIDER VEINS?

If you have a painful or unsightly vein, contact a vascular surgeon for a consultation. Call 607-547-3400.

