

# COMMISSIONING POLICY

## Surgery for venous disease of the leg (Varicosities of the Long Saphenous Vein)

December 2011

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## SUMMARY

Birmingham & Solihull Commissioning Cluster will routinely fund surgery for venous disease of the legs that meets eligibility criteria.

An electronic copy of this Commissioning Policy is available on the Cluster's website at the following address:

<https://www.sbpct.nhs.uk/bham-and-solihull-cluster/individual-funding-requests.aspx>

### 1. Background

Varicose veins are common affecting 15% to 30% of the adult population. They are tortuous distended bulging veins lying beneath the skin in the legs. They commonly arise from incompetence in the long and short saphenous veins and their branches, though they may be secondary varicosities with associated deep venous disease. They are not to be confused with intra-dermal spider veins or thread veins which lie within the skin.

Complications from varicose veins include eczema, induration [lipodermatosclerosis], pigmentation, bleeding, thrombophlebitis and ulceration. Patients complain both of the appearance and report symptoms such as aching in the leg, pains in the leg, restlessness, cramps, itchiness, heaviness and swelling. A link between symptoms and varicose vein severity can be difficult to establish. Referral advice has been issued by NICE in a guide to appropriate referral from general to specialist services [NICE 2001]. The advice from NICE is reiterated in the 18 Week Patient Pathway on Varicose Veins.

Most varicose veins need no treatment and many with complications can be managed in Primary Care by offering:

- Graduated compression stockings. These control most symptoms attributable to varicose veins, including aching and ankle swelling in addition to reducing the risk of ulceration. Stockings are available on FP10 or can be purchased from pharmacists. *Class one* stockings are suitable for mild symptoms whilst significant ankle oedema or prevention of ulcer recurrence requires a *class two* stocking. Below-knee stockings are usually effective but some patients find them uncomfortable or ineffective if varicosities are in the thigh. Thigh-length stockings may be prescribed but many patients report difficulty keeping them up. Suspender belts are effective and some manufacturers now offer graduated compression stockings with "stay-ups".
- Lifestyle support and advice. Losing weight helps and there are specific exercise including leg elevation at rest that also helps;
- Reassurance. In most cases varicose veins will not result in harm, though advice about DVT prevention when flying should be given.

Varicose eczema if severe or inflamed can be treated effectively with topical steroids.

Thrombophlebitis usually responds to leg elevation, topical or systemic NSAID's and stockings. Antibiotics are occasionally required for secondary infection.

## **2. Criteria for eligibility**

Referral to a specialist service is required when there are one or more severe symptoms:

- Bleeding from varicose veins which have bled and are at risk of bleeding again
- A new varicose ulcer
- An severe ulcer that has healed but is likely to recur
- Patients with physical signs of prolonged venous hypertension which include haemasiderin pigmentation, eczema, induration [lipodermatosclerosis], significant oedema associated with skin changes
- Those patients who have had superficial thrombophlebitis, especially recurrent thrombophlebitis in association with varicose veins
- Those having troublesome symptoms attributable to chronic venous insufficiency where those symptoms are having significant effect on quality of life

## **3. Implementation**

Emergency care patients and patients with suspected cancer are excluded from this policy.

The implementation of this policy will be monitored as per the agreed process defined within the acute services contract.

#### 4. Procedures Covered by Policy

OPCS Codes (One of)

L831	OTHER OPERATIONS FOR VENOUS INSUFFICIENCY	CROSSOVER GRAFT OF SAPHENOUS VEIN
L832	OTHER OPERATIONS FOR VENOUS INSUFFICIENCY	SUBFASCIAL LIGATION OF PERFORATING VEIN OF LEG
L838	OTHER OPERATIONS FOR VENOUS INSUFFICIENCY	OTHER SPECIFIED
L839	OTHER OPERATIONS FOR VENOUS INSUFFICIENCY	UNSPECIFIED
L841	COMBINED OPERATIONS ON VARICOSE VEIN OF LEG	COMBINED OPERATIONS ON PRIMARY LONG SAPHENOUS VEIN
L842	COMBINED OPERATIONS ON VARICOSE VEIN OF LEG	COMBINED OPERATIONS ON PRIMARY SHORT SAPHENOUS VEIN
L843	COMBINED OPERATIONS ON VARICOSE VEIN OF LEG	COMBINED OPERATIONS ON PRIMARY LONG AND SHORT SAPHENOUS VEIN
L844	COMBINED OPERATIONS ON VARICOSE VEIN OF LEG	COMBINED OPERATIONS ON RECURRENT LONG SAPHENOUS VEIN
L845	COMBINED OPERATIONS ON VARICOSE VEIN OF LEG	COMBINED OPERATIONS ON RECURRENT SHORT SAPHENOUS VEIN
L846	COMBINED OPERATIONS ON VARICOSE VEIN OF LEG	COMBINED OPERATIONS ON RECURRENT LONG AND SHORT SAPHENOUS VE
L848	COMBINED OPERATIONS ON VARICOSE VEIN OF LEG	OTHER SPECIFIED
L849	COMBINED OPERATIONS ON VARICOSE VEIN OF LEG	UNSPECIFIED
L851	LIGATION OF VARICOSE VEIN OF LEG	LIGATION OF LONG SAPHENOUS VEIN
L852	LIGATION OF VARICOSE VEIN OF LEG	LIGATION OF SHORT SAPHENOUS VEIN
L853	LIGATION OF VARICOSE VEIN OF LEG	LIGATION OF RECURRENT VARICOSE VEIN OF LEG
L858	LIGATION OF VARICOSE VEIN OF LEG	OTHER SPECIFIED
L859	LIGATION OF VARICOSE VEIN OF LEG	UNSPECIFIED

Cont.

Birmingham & Solihull Commissioning Cluster  
Procedures of Lower Clinical Value

L861	INJECTION INTO VARICOSE VEIN OF LEG	INJECTION OF SCLEROSING SUBSTANCE INTO VARICOSE VEIN OF LEG
L862	INJECTION INTO VARICOSE VEIN OF LEG	ULTRASOUND GUIDED FOAM SCLEROTHERAPY FOR VARICOSE VEIN OF LE
L868	INJECTION INTO VARICOSE VEIN OF LEG	OTHER SPECIFIED
L869	INJECTION INTO VARICOSE VEIN OF LEG	UNSPECIFIED
L871	OTHER OPERATIONS ON VARICOSE VEIN OF LEG	STRIPPING OF LONG SAPHENOUS VEIN
L872	OTHER OPERATIONS ON VARICOSE VEIN OF LEG	STRIPPING OF SHORT SAPHENOUS VEIN
L873	OTHER OPERATIONS ON VARICOSE VEIN OF LEG	STRIPPING OF VARICOSE VEIN OF LEG NEC
L874	OTHER OPERATIONS ON VARICOSE VEIN OF LEG	AVULSION OF VARICOSE VEIN OF LEG
L875	OTHER OPERATIONS ON VARICOSE VEIN OF LEG	LOCAL EXCISION OF VARICOSE VEIN OF LEG
L876	OTHER OPERATIONS ON VARICOSE VEIN OF LEG	INCISION OF VARICOSE VEIN OF LEG
L877	OTHER OPERATIONS ON VARICOSE VEIN OF LEG	TRANSILLUMINATED POWERED PHLEBECTOMY OF VARICOSE VEIN OF LEG
L878	OTHER OPERATIONS ON VARICOSE VEIN OF LEG	OTHER SPECIFIED
L879	OTHER OPERATIONS ON VARICOSE VEIN OF LEG	UNSPECIFIED
L881	TRANSLUMINAL OPERATIONS ON VARICOSE VEIN OF LEG	PERCUTANEOUS TRANSLUMINAL LASER ABLATION/LONG SAPHENOUS VEIN
L882	TRANSLUMINAL OPERATIONS ON VARICOSE VEIN OF LEG	RADIOFREQUENCY ABLATION OF VARICOSE VEIN OF LEG
L883	TRANSLUMINAL OPERATIONS ON VARICOSE VEIN OF LEG	PERCUTANEOUS TRANSLUMINAL LASER ABLATION OF VARICOSE VEIN OF
L888	TRANSLUMINAL OPERATIONS ON VARICOSE VEIN OF LEG	OTHER SPECIFIED
L889	TRANSLUMINAL OPERATIONS ON VARICOSE VEIN OF LEG	UNSPECIFIED
L918	OTHER SPECIFIED OTHER VEIN RELATED OPERATIONS	OTHER SPECIFIED
L919	UNSPECIFIED OTHER VEIN RELATED OPERATIONS	UNSPECIFIED
L932	INCISION OF VEIN NEC	
L933	LIGATION OF VEIN NEC	