Thread veins
Telangiectasia

Exceptional healthcare, personally delivered
Welcome to the Bristol Laser Centre

We are part of the Plastic Surgery Department at North Bristol NHS Trust and were set up in 1992 as one of the first UK centres to offer skin laser treatments.

We treat patients from all over the South West area, both private and NHS referrals. All our staff are fully trained doctors and nurses who have received specialist training in skin laser treatment. A variety of lasers are available for different skin conditions.

We also provide non-laser treatment via our camouflage clinic and Outlook clinic offering emotional support and counselling services.

Thread Veins (Telangiectasia)

What are thread veins?

They are tiny blood vessels, which show up on the skin surface, because they have become enlarged for one reason or another. Some people call them ‘broken veins’. Their proper name is telangiectasia. They do not usually disappear without treatment.

What has caused them?

- Over exposure to the sun, or excessive heating of the skin.
- Long term use of steroid creams on the skin.
- Ageing skin.
- Excess oestrogen, as a result of pregnancy or from the contraceptive pill.
- In some people the problem runs in the family.
- Sometimes people just get them and no reason can be found.
What treatment is available?
Thread veins on the face may be improved by laser therapy. You will have an assessment before treatment is offered. This will give you a chance to consider all the factors involved.

What is laser therapy?
Laser therapy is the use of laser light to achieve a ‘shut down’ of the blood vessels that are causing your problem. The laser is a very powerful energy source that produces a very bright light. When the blood vessel absorbs this light it heats up, rather like a black object heats up in sunlight. By controlling the colour, energy and direction of the laser it is possible to treat the thread veins with minimal effect on the surrounding skin.

How successful is treatment?
Laser treatment can usually reduce the number and/or the size of the vessels, but does not completely eliminate the problem. The laser does not stop new vessels developing over time.

Are there any side effects or risks of treatment?
There is a low risk of a small scar in the treated area. Change in the colour of the skin around the area treated may occur. This usually returns to normal but can take a long time to do so. We will discuss possible side effects at your assessment. You must wear special glasses during treatment to protect your eyes.

What does the treatment feel like?
Laser treatment with the pulse dye laser feels like having a rubber band snapped at your skin, patients say treatment is more uncomfortable than painful.
How can I prepare for treatment?

It is very important that your skin is as pale as possible before treatment. You should not have a suntan or use sun beds, false tan or ‘holiday skin’ moisturisers. You should use sunblock in the area before treatment begins and during the course of treatment.

If your skin is dry, use a plain moisturiser over the area.

Some medication and herbal remedies make your skin more sensitive to lasers. Please bring a list of your medicines to your assessment and tell us each time your medication changes.

What happens after treatment?

All procedures are done on an outpatient basis. With laser therapy there is no cutting of the skin and very little aftercare is needed, but you should not expose the treated area to excess sun (e.g. foreign holidays) for 4 weeks after treatment.

You may get some swelling over the treated area which usually goes down within a few hours. The pulse dye laser leaves purple bruises over the treated area which can last up to a week. You will be given written instructions on how to care for the treated area.

How many treatment sessions would I need?

Patients have three to four treatments on average but it depends on the size of the area to be treated and how many veins there are within this area. At assessment you will be given a more accurate picture of how many sessions you will require. Treatments are usually spaced at least 8 weeks apart.
Are photographs necessary?
We require photographs of the area to be treated before you start a course of treatment and at intervals during your treatment. This helps us to monitor your progress and any side effects of treatment. You can request a photographer of the same sex as yourself if you wish.

How can I make an appointment?
The Laser Centre offers both an NHS and private service. For NHS patients a referral letter from your GP or hospital consultant is required before an appointment can be arranged. A referral letter may not be necessary for private treatment. Some treatments are only available privately. Staff at the centre can give you further details.

Reference
If you or the individual you are caring for need support reading this leaflet please ask a member of staff for advice.

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