

Clinical Policy: Sclerotherapy and Chemical Endovenous Ablation for Varicose Veins

Reference Number: LA.CP.MP.146

Last Review Date: 7/22

Coding Implications
Revision Log

See [Important Reminder](#) at the end of this policy for important regulatory and legal information.

Description

Sclerotherapy is a minimally invasive procedure to diminish abnormally dilated and symptomatic veins.¹ In this procedure, liquid, foam, or glue irritants are injected into unwanted varicose veins, causing their eventual reduction.¹⁻² This policy describes the medical necessity requirements for sclerotherapy and endovenous ablation with chemical adhesives.

Policy/Criteria

- I. It is the policy of Louisiana Healthcare Connections that sclerotherapy using liquid or foam irritants (including, but not limited to, Varithena) are **medically necessary** when meeting the following:²⁻⁵
 - A. Varicose veins, one of the following:
 1. Perforating vein located beneath a healed or open venous ulcer, and both of the following:
 - a. Junctional reflux ≥ 500 milliseconds;
 - b. Diameter ≥ 3.5 mm;
 2. Ultrasound-documented varicosities of the greater saphenous vein, smaller saphenous vein, perforating veins, tributary veins, or accessory veins, and both of the following:
 - a. Junctional reflux ≥ 500 milliseconds and/or vein diameter ≥ 3 mm;
 - b. Complications attributed to the varicosities, including any of the following:
 - i. Intractable ulceration;
 - ii. Hemorrhage or recurrent bleeding episodes from a ruptured varicosity;
 - iii. Recurrent superficial thrombophlebitis;
 - iv. Severe and persistent pain and swelling, including both of the following:
 - a) Duration ≥ 6 months;
 - b) Failure of ≥ 3 months of conservative treatment including compression therapy, unless contraindicated (i.e., suspected or proven peripheral arterial disease, severe peripheral neuropathy, etc.);
 - B. None of the following contraindications:
 1. Previous administration of sclerotherapy agent < 6 weeks prior;
 2. Allergy to sclerotherapy agent;
 3. Pregnant or within 3 months after delivery;
 4. Acute febrile illness;
 5. Local or general infection;
 6. Severe distal arterial occlusive disease (ankle-brachial index 0.4 or less);
 7. Critical limb ischemia, arterial ulcer(s), gangrene;
 8. Obliteration of deep venous system;
 9. Recent deep venous thrombosis;
 10. Acute deep venous thrombophlebitis or acute superficial thrombophlebitis;
 11. Inability to ambulate;
 12. Tortuosity of the great saphenous vein severe enough to impede catheter placement;

13. Klippel-Trenaunay Syndrome or other congenital venous abnormalities.
- C. If cyanoacrylate adhesive (e.g. VenaSeal™) is requested, it is for treatment of the small saphenous vein only.
- II.** It is the policy of Louisiana Healthcare Connections that sclerotherapy is insufficient evidence in the published peer-reviewed literature to support the use of sclerotherapy for any of the following indications:
- A. Asymptomatic varicose veins: superficial reticular veins and/or telangiectasias;
- B. For the treatment of all other conditions than those specified above.
- III.** It is the policy of Louisiana Healthcare Connections that cyanoacrylate adhesive (e.g. VenaSeal™) is considered investigational for the treatment of varicose veins.

Background

Varicose veins are enlarged, twisted blood vessels often found in the lower extremities and can cause significant pain and discomfort and can negatively impact quality of life.^{1,6-8} Varicose veins are considered a sign of chronic venous insufficiency, a condition characterized by dysfunction of the valves in veins, which can cause increased blood pressure, blood pooling, and venous reflux in affected areas.⁶ Additionally, varicose veins can cause superficial thrombophlebitis, bleeding, and ulceration. The pathophysiology that leads to varicosities include inadequate muscle pump function, incompetent venous valves (reflux), venous thrombosis, and nonthrombotic venous obstruction.⁹

Sclerotherapy

According to clinical practice guidelines by the Society for Vascular Surgery and the American Venous Forum, sclerotherapy is a recommended treatment option for varicose veins.² Sclerotherapy is a minimally invasive and cost effective procedure used to treat varicose veins.^{3,10-11} To perform this procedure, chemical irritants are injected into the unwanted vein to close varicosities.^{1-2,9-10} Destruction of venous endothelial cells and the formation of a fibrotic obstruction facilitate the venous closure due to injection of sclerosing agents.^{2,12} Liquid and foam sclerotherapy are the two predominant modalities for the introduction of sclerosing agents; examples of such sclerosing agents include osmotic, alcohol and detergent agents.^{2,8} Categories of sclerosing agents include osmotic, alcohol, and detergent agents.²

Systematic reviews of randomized controlled trials of sclerotherapy have found that choice of sclerosing agents, dose, formulation (foam versus liquid), among other factors lack a significant effect on the efficacy of sclerotherapy for varicose veins.^{7,10} Trials using standardized sclerosant doses and clearly defined outcomes are needed in order to obtain higher quality evidence.⁷

There is no consensus in the literature regarding the optimal number of sclerotherapy treatments required to reduce the symptoms associated with varicose veins. Treatment of symptomatic recurrent varicose veins should be performed after careful evaluation of the patient with duplex scanning to assess the etiology, source, type, and extent of recurrent varicose veins.² Unnecessary retreatment of an effectively sclerosed vein should not be performed since retreatment of any single area should be delayed for 6–8 weeks to allow the treated veins to completely heal.⁶

Endovenous ablation with cyanoacrylate

Although cyanoacrylate adhesive has been introduced as a chemical adhesive for use in endovenous ablation, future follow-up studies are needed to support the efficacy and safety in treatment of varicose veins. The notable literature currently consists of a retrospective and a prospective study without randomization.¹³ Further long-term studies are needed to support the use of cyanoacrylate prior to integration into medical necessity guidelines.¹³

Coding Implications

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Codes that support medical necessity

CPT® Codes	Description
36465	Injection of non-compounded foam sclerosant with ultrasound compression maneuvers to guide dispersion of the injectate, inclusive of all imaging guidance and monitoring; single incompetent extremity truncal vein (eg, great saphenous vein, accessory saphenous vein)
36466	Injection of non-compounded foam sclerosant with ultrasound compression maneuvers to guide dispersion of the injectate, inclusive of all imaging guidance and monitoring; multiple incompetent truncal veins (eg, great saphenous vein, accessory saphenous vein), same leg.
36470	Injection of sclerosant; single incompetent vein (other than telangiectasia)
36471	Injection of sclerosant; multiple incompetent veins (other than telangiectasia), same leg
36482	Endovenous ablation therapy of incompetent vein, extremity, by transcatheter delivery of a chemical adhesive (eg, cyanoacrylate) remote from the access site, inclusive of all imaging guidance and monitoring, percutaneous; first vein treated
36483	Endovenous ablation therapy of incompetent vein, extremity, by transcatheter delivery of a chemical adhesive (eg, cyanoacrylate) remote from the access site, inclusive of all imaging guidance and monitoring, percutaneous; subsequent vein(s) treated in a single extremity, each through separate access sites (List separately in addition to code for primary procedure)

Reviews, Revisions, and Approvals	Date	Approval Date
Converted corporate to local policy.	08/15/2020	
<p>“Experimental/investigational” verbiage replaced in policy statement with descriptive language. References reviewed and updated. Replaced all instances of “member” with “member/enrollee.” Renamed policy from “Sclerotherapy for Varicose Veins” to “Sclerotherapy and chemical endovenous ablation for Varicose Veins.” Clarified in III to cyanoacrylate is used in endovenous ablation and not sclerotherapy. Updated background accordingly. Changed “review date” in policy header to “date of last revision,” and “date” in the revision log header to “revision date.”</p> <p>Annual review. Added I.C, that if cyanoacrylate adhesive (VenaSeal) is requested, it is for the small saphenous vein only. Removed section III stating that cyanoacrylate adhesive is not medically necessary. Removed table of codes that do not support medical necessity and added codes 36482 and 36483 to table of codes that support medical necessity. References reviewed and updated. Description and background updated with no impact on criteria. Added “and may not support medical necessity” to coding implications. Specialist reviewed.</p>	7/22	9/26/22

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Important Reminder

This clinical policy has been developed by appropriately experienced and licensed health care professionals based on a review and consideration of currently available generally accepted standards of medical practice; peer-reviewed medical literature; government agency/program approval status; evidence-based guidelines and positions of leading national health professional organizations; views of physicians practicing in relevant clinical areas affected by this clinical policy; and other available clinical information. LHCC makes no representations and accepts no liability with respect to the content of any external information used or relied upon in developing this clinical policy. This clinical policy is consistent with standards of medical practice current at the time that this clinical policy was approved.

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Sclerotherapy for Varicose Veins



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