

## Clinical Policy: Sclerotherapy for Varicose Veins

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### Description

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

### Policy/Criteria

- I. It is the policy of Pennsylvania Health and Wellness<sup>®</sup> (PHW) that sclerotherapy is **medically necessary** for the following indications:
  - A. Symptomatic varicose veins, including all of the following criteria:
    1. Ultrasound-documented saphenous varicosities at the saphenofemoral junction or saphenopopliteal junction, including both of the following:
      - a. Junctional reflux  $\geq$  500 milliseconds;
      - b. Vein size  $\geq$  3 mm;
    2. Complications attributed to the varicosities, including any of the following:
      - a. Intractable ulceration;
      - b. Hemorrhage or recurrent bleeding episodes from a ruptured varicosity;
      - c. Recurrent superficial thrombophlebitis;
      - d. Severe and persistent pain and swelling, including both of the following:
        - i. Duration  $\geq$  6 months;
        - ii. Failure of >3 months of conservative treatment including compression therapy unless contraindicated.;
    3. Liquid or foam agents are used
      - a. Cyanoacrylate adhesive is investigational
    4. Does NOT include any of the following contraindications:
      - a. Allergy to sclerotherapy agent;
      - b. During pregnancy and for 3 months after delivery;
      - c. Acute febrile illness;
      - d. Local or general infection;
      - e. Severe distal arterial occlusive disease (ankle-brachial index 0.4 or less);
      - f. Critical limb ischemia, arterial ulcer(s), gangrene;
      - g. Obliteration of deep venous system;
      - h. Recent deep venous thrombosis;
      - i. Acute deep venous thrombophlebitis or acute superficial thrombophlebitis;
      - j. Inability to ambulate;
      - k. Previous administration of sclerotherapy;
      - l. Syndrome/congenital abnormalities of veins;
      - m. Tortuosity of the great saphenous vein severe enough to impede catheter placement.

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- II.** It is the policy of PHW that sclerotherapy is **not medically necessary** for any of the following indications:
- A. Asymptomatic varicose veins
    - 1. Superficial reticular veins and/or telangiectasias;
  - B. For the treatment of all other conditions than those specified above.
- III.** It is the policy of PHW that cyanoacrylate adhesive (e.g. VenaSeal™) is considered investigational for the treatment of varicose veins.

#### Background

Varicose veins can cause significant pain and discomfort, superficial thrombophlebitis, bleeding, and ulceration. As such, chronic venous insufficiency, including symptomatic varicosities, can have a substantial negative impact on quality of life.<sup>1</sup> The pathophysiology that leads to these varicosities include inadequate muscle pump function, incompetent venous valves (reflux), and venous obstruction.<sup>2</sup>

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.<sup>4</sup>

Sclerotherapy is a minimally invasive and cost effective procedure used to treat varicose veins. To perform this procedure, chemical irritants are injected into the unwanted vein to close varicosities. Destruction of venous endothelial cells and the formation of a fibrotic obstruction facilitate the venous closure due to injection of sclerosing agents. 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.<sup>3,4</sup> A systemic review by Tisi *et al* evaluated 17 randomized controlled trials, and concluded 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.<sup>6</sup>

Although cyanoacrylate adhesive has been introduced as an injectable agent for use in sclerotherapy, 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.<sup>7,9</sup> Further long-term studies are needed to support the use of cyanoacrylate prior to integration into medical necessity guidelines.

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.<sup>4</sup>

Retreatment of any single area should be delayed for 6–8 weeks to allow the treated veins to heal fully; in this manner, unnecessary retreatment of an effectively sclerosed vein is not performed.<sup>12</sup>

#### Coding Implications

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from the current manuals and those included herein are not intended to be all-inclusive and are included for informational purposes only. Codes referenced in this clinical policy are for informational purposes only. Inclusion or exclusion of any codes does not guarantee coverage. Providers should reference the most up-to-date sources of professional coding guidance prior to the submission of claims for reimbursement of covered services.

#### 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

#### Codes that do not support medical necessity

CPT® Codes	Description
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
Policy Developed	10/17	
References reviewed and updated. CPT codes updated.	05/18	11/18
Updated description to include mention of glue irritants. Added contraindication for previous administration of sclerotherapy and syndrome/congenital abnormalities. In "I." added stipulation that liquid or foam agents to be used in sclerotherapy. Added statement that cyanoacrylate adhesive is investigational with supporting background information. In I.A.2.d. removed failure of >3 weeks prescription dose analgesic medications for pain and added failure of > 3 months of	10/19	1/10/2020

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Reviews, Revisions, and Approvals	Date	Approval Date
conservative treatment including compression therapy unless contraindicated.		
<p>Added VenaSeal as an example of cyanoacrylate in the investigational statement in section III. Added codes for cyanoacrylate to a new table of codes that do not support medical necessity.</p> <p>Added perforating veins under a current or healed ulcer as an indication; Edited previous criteria for saphenous veins to apply to saphenous veins or perforating veins. Specialist review.</p> <p>Changed requirement for junctional reflux of greater saphenous veins to 3 mm, from 2.5 mm. Background updated with no impact on criteria. References reviewed and updated. Revised policy statement adding Varithena as an example of a foam irritant.</p> <p>In I.A.2., added tributary and accessory vein treatment as indications when meeting the established criteria.</p>	2/18/2021	

**References**

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