



## **Spider veins.....EEK!**

Tiny tufts of veins affectionately called spider veins or as referred to in medical lingo as telangiectasias are dilated superficial blood vessels. They can occur at any age but are more common in older age individuals. They may appear on any skin surface, however, they seem to have a predilection for the face and the legs. Dilated superficial vessels tend to emerge in areas overexposed to the sun, wind or cold and are more noticeable in those who have a fair complexion.

Most often these annoying signs of aging are benign in nature and only of a cosmetic concern. However, occasionally there may be an underlying serious medical condition deserving of attention. A hereditary form of telangiectasia can lead to frequent nosebleeds and serious internal hemorrhaging.

However this condition known as Osler Weber Rendu disease is usually well-recognized in affected families. Telangiectasias may also be associated



with an underlying auto-immune disease, skin cancer or prior radiation therapy. Undiagnosed liver disease in particular may be associated with aberrant cutaneous vessels.

Once you have decided to seek aesthetic treatment you should expect your physician to take a complete history and physical. Assuming no serious cause for the telangiectasia, what are your treatment options? Traditional methods of sclerotherapy, in which a salt solution is injected directly into the vein, can be successful when performed by experienced physicians. However many patients are opposed to frequent needle sticks in addition to the associated risk of this treatment modality. Another method utilizing direct cauterization of the vessels provides nonspecific thermal damage to the vessel, which not only destroys the vessel but can also burn surrounding tissues.

The latest in laser technology is rapidly becoming the state of art for pinpointing and deleting out small telangiectasias without injuring surrounding tissues. Recent advancements with the yag laser and the variable pulse frequency double yag laser has resulted in a dependable safe and effective mode of treatment. Laser treatments can be performed in an office setting on an outpatient basis. The treatment takes minutes and is associated with very little discomfort. Following treatment you can expect to be slightly red but this quickly fades and most people feel comfortable immediately returning to their daily routines. It is important to recognize that it often takes more than one treatment before successfully eradicating the vessels. Treatments are usually spread out over four to six week intervals. Rarely a blister can appear at the treated site but this should not cause too much concern, as it will heal within a few days. Unfortunately, laser treatment can be expensive, ranging in price from \$250 to \$600 and is unlikely to be covered by insurance. However, for the many bothered by the unsightly appearance of red spiders on their skin, the option to safely and effectively remove them is well worth the investment.



***Steven H. Dayan, MD, FACS***

***The Chicago Center for Facial Plastic Surgery***

***2900 N. Lake Shore Drive, Manor Building, Suite 430***

***Chicago, Illinois 60657***