

The thin

red line

They may only be tiny, but thread veins are the bane of many a woman's life. Thankfully, there are a variety of high-tech treatments to zap them into oblivion.... !



As the winter party season approaches its tempting to throw caution to the wind and have one too many glasses of wine. But fun loving ladies beware - excessive alcohol and smoking can seriously damage your looks - not least by provoking an outbreak of ugly little thread veins. Be sure wrap up warm when you go for an autumn walk too, because skin that's exposed to extreme temperatures may also fall foul to these tiny terrors. Very hot, spicy food should also be avoided because red veins thrive on them.

They appear most commonly on the cheeks, nose and legs. While not a health risk, the larger ones can be distinctly unsightly.

They are caused when veins expand and start to show through the skin and are more obvious after mid-life when the skin becomes thinner and loses some of its collagen.

Vascular surgeon Dr Brian Newman says there are a lot of causes for thread veins on the legs, and they seem to be different for men and women. "They seem to be triggered by surges in oestrogen and often occur when women go on the pill, after pregnancy or HRT. They also seem to be associated with varicose veins and sometimes occur at the site where the veins have been pulled out. Trauma and general deterioration of the skin are also related to the cause of thread veins on the legs."

Thread veins on the face are often associated with redness, a condition known as rosacea. This seems to be connected with a blockage of the

Case File

Name: Susan Radcliff

Age: 38

Treatment: Thread vein removal to legs

Cost: A session on the legs, which includes front and back of both legs is £350.

Susan had suffered with thread veins on her legs since she was 24 years old and had numerous unsuccessful treatments on her legs, including laser treatment. She is a fitness instructor and found that not only did were her veins unsightly but

after exercise her veins looked much worse. She had a combination of treatments which included one Veinwave treatment and one course of injections with saline. She had an excellent cosmetic result so that with a normal tan or fake tan you couldn't see any of her veins which had previously been impossible to cover.

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sebaceous glands which leads to a low grade infection in the skin, causing redness and over time a degree of facial thread veins most commonly seen around the nose, chin, cheeks and forehead. Other rare causes of thread veins on the face and legs include steroid treatments, Cushing's syndrome, and radiotherapy used in the treatment of cancer.

TREATMENT OPTIONS

People with thread veins may decide to have no treatment done and cover them thread veins with a cosmetic camouflage but once the veins are larger it can become more difficult to cover the veins – this is when treatment is required. Treatments available include injections such as sclerotherapy, laser treatment and high-intensity light treatment.

Sclerotherapy involves injecting the veins with a solution of saline (salt

“Normally, the tiny veins in the skin are invisible, but in some people they expand and show through the skin”

water) using tiny needles which make the walls of the veins stick together. Usually, you need to wear compression stockings for one week afterwards, while the veins break up and disperse naturally over the following 2-3 weeks. Several treatments may be needed, and there can be the possible side-effects of a skin reaction, such as dark patches. The veins may return, but treatment can be repeated. »

Laser treatment is often used to treat thread veins on the face.

Mother of three Patsy Webb, 47, recently had the veins around her nose lasered. She found it quite painful.

'I had an injection through my top gum to numb the area around my nose before the laser was applied. The injection was quick but quite uncomfortable and I felt a kind of flicking sensation as the laser was applied.'

However, she was very pleased with the results. "Thread veins seem to run in my family - my mother and grandmother had them on the face and over time they multiplied.

'I was told that I might get further outbreaks both on my face and body as I age and I'd definitely go back for more treatment,' she adds.

Another method for zapping thread veins on the face is high-intensity light treatment (Photoderm.) This heats the veins to make them coagulate. It can cover a bigger area than laser treatment but this technique appears to be more risky and less effective than laser treatment. There's also electrolysis which is offered by many beauty clinics, and involves a fine needle passing a current into the skin, but this is less effective than the other treatments, and there is a greater risk of scarring.

NEW PROCEDURE

A fantastic new way to combat thread veins without any side-effects is Dr Newman's Veinwave. The joy of this high-tech treatment is how quick and painless it is.

Veinwave uses a new method called thermo-coagulation, where heat is produced by a high-frequency electric current to remove the thread vein.

Veinwave is a 'walk-in, walk-out' procedure, says Dr Newman. "It is virtually painless with no risk of scarring, bruising or any change in pigmentation.

Patients can carry on as normal immediately after a treatment and even go in the sun if they wish. In my clinics, patients will come in their lunch time, have a treatment and go back to work immediately after."

There is no bandaging required after Veinwave on the legs and immediately after treatment the thread veins will instantly disappear. The patient will feel as if nothing has happened in that area apart from some slight tingling. After a few days they may experience some redness and a cat scratch look along the veins that have been treated which shows the veins are healing.

"Thread veins can make people feel very self-conscious, especially during summer when women tend to wear bathing suits on holiday - but there's really no need to worry," says Dr Newman, "Veinwave may not be overly cheap but it works and its permanent."

Of course, one thing us ladies need to bear in mind is that prevention is always better than a cure - so don't overdo it on the wine and hot, spicy foods takeaways!

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Case File

Name: Catherine Fisher

Age: 40

Treatment: Venous thread vein removal to ankle

Cost: Four sessions at £350 each

Catherine had previously had many failed laser treatments which had not cleared the venous flare on the her ankle and the area still troubled her

TOP TIPS TO

PREVENT

THREAD VEINS

1 Find a good concealer and use it under your make-up. Using an artificial suntan preparation will make leg thread veins appear less obvious.

2 Avoid alcoholic drinks, very hot drinks and spicy foods as these can make your thread veins more obvious.

3 Horse chestnut cream (available from health food stores) is said to strengthen the tiny veins in the skin. Apply gently to the legs to avoid traumatizing the skin.

4 Try to avoid exposing your skin to extremes of temperature - stepping out into the cold, or running into a hot bath.

and caused discomfort. After four Veinwave sessions, the area was much improved.

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