

The Review of Clinical Policies for Lancashire and South Cumbria Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) – Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Supplementary FAQ's

These frequently asked questions are supplementary to the FAQ's already identified as part of the clinical policy review process.

Policy for the treatment of varicose veins

Why do we need a policy on the treatment of varicose veins?

Varicose veins have a number of symptoms ranging from their appearance, as lumpy, bulging or twisted blue or dark purple veins, through to aching, heavy legs, swollen feet and ankles and dark, itchy skin. Most cases of varicose veins may look unsightly but do not require any medical treatment. Other symptoms can be more significant and in limited cases can lead to complications. Having a policy ensures that patients who require treatment and who need to avoid complications are the ones who receive a service and that this is delivered fairly and equitably across the region.

My varicose veins make my legs very noticeable and make me self-conscious. Can this be treated on the NHS?

Varicose veins that make your legs or feet look unsightly but have no other symptoms would be cosmetic only and would not therefore, be funded on the NHS. Only varicose veins that give you other symptoms may be funded on the NHS. This policy identifies broadly what those symptoms (the criteria) are but they exclude treatment that is purely for cosmetic reasons.

I've been on the internet, including NHS choices, which mentions using compression stockings for up to 6 months as a preliminary treatment for varicose veins. This policy does not advocate the use of compression stockings. Who do I believe?

The use of compression hosiery has been a traditional, non-surgical method of treating varicose veins for many years. The latest clinical guidance indicates that the evidence to support this method of treating varicose veins is weak. Changes to clinical guidelines of this nature can sometimes take a few months to reach all relevant sources of information and all practitioners.

If I have been recommended to use a compression stocking by my GP should I ignore this advice?

No, you should not ignore the advice of your GP. The proposed, new policy has not been agreed and does not replace current practice until it is agreed. The current policy which your GP is likely to be following makes no reference to the use of

compressions hosiery. In addition, your GP must take account of your individual circumstances.

The proposed varicose veins policy indicates that compression hosiery should still be used where other types of treatment are not possible and NICE indicate it should still be considered to ease the symptoms of varicose veins during pregnancy. Contact your GP if you have questions.