

## **Lipodermatosclerosis**

### **What is lipodermatosclerosis?**

Lipodermatosclerosis is a type of panniculitis (inflammation of the fat under the skin) and usually affects the lower legs. It more commonly affects middle-aged people.

### **What causes lipodermatosclerosis?**

The exact cause of lipodermatosclerosis is not known. Lipodermatosclerosis most commonly occurs in people with raised pressure in the leg veins (venous hypertension or venous incompetence). The raised pressure causes fluid and proteins to leak out of the veins and causes fibrosis and inflammation of the underlying skin. There may also be a lack of oxygen and nutrient delivery to the tissue.

### **What does lipodermatosclerosis look like?**

Lipodermatosclerosis may present as an acute or chronic condition.

Acute lipodermatosclerosis presents as painful, red inflammation of the lower legs and is often confused with infection.

Chronic lipodermatosclerosis may develop gradually over time or following an acute episode. People with chronic lipodermatosclerosis gradually develop thickened or hardened skin with increased pigmentation. There may be tapering of the legs above the ankles resembling an inverted champagne bottle. Over time the skin may become more fragile resulting in leg ulcers.

### **How is lipodermatosclerosis diagnosed?**

Lipodermatosclerosis is usually diagnosed based on its clinical appearance. In rare cases, your dermatologist may perform a skin biopsy to exclude other conditions that can look like lipodermatosclerosis. Blood tests are not required. An ultrasound scan of the leg may be performed to look for evidence of problems with the veins.

### **How is lipodermatosclerosis treated?**

Lipodermatosclerosis may be a difficult condition to treat. Management includes treating the underlying problem with the veins and/or wearing compression stockings. As lipodermatosclerosis is often seen in overweight people, weight reduction is also important. Other treatments that may be of benefit include massage, ultrasound therapy, topical steroid ointments and medications such as pentoxifylline or stanozolol.