

LIPODERMATOSCLEROSIS

Lipodermatosclerosis is a long and fancy medical name for a skin condition which tends to occur on the lower legs. The term is derived from the individual components of the word. Lipo refers to the fat layer of the skin and dermato refers to the skin layer of the skin. These are the areas that are affected by this condition. The term sclerosis refers to a scarring process. In essence this condition produces scarring of both the skin and the fat which leads to the bound down tight feeling skin of the lower legs.

This condition normally is present on the lower legs around the ankles. The surface can appear red or discolored. The skin feels firm. In some cases small hard areas develop on top of the skin within the areas affected. Sometimes it causes difficulty in moving the ankle because of stiffness and pain. The condition is most uncomfortable when you are on your feet for long periods of time.

Lipodermatosclerosis is related to another condition called stasis which refers to poor drainage of blood through the veins in the legs. Varicose veins, swelling and darkening of the skin areas are also associated with this condition. Patients may have a history of phlebitis or skin ulcers in the area. Some people have had leg infections in the past.

Lipodermatosclerosis is a difficult problem to treat. The only reliable therapy is the regular use of compression stockings. These are the tight types of socks or stockings that help the veins drain blood from the legs. They are put on in the morning preferably while you are still in bed, worn throughout the day and then taken off while lying in bed before going to sleep. Compression stockings can improve some of the changes in the skin and reduce the risk for further infections or ulcers. These usually can be obtained in surgical supply stores such as Bensons. There are different sizes and strengths and I will determine which is best based on your condition.

Breaks in the skin can occur in patients with lipodermatosclerosis. Trying to prevent any injuries to the skin is important since the small breaks can lead to infection. In many cases a topical medication is used to keep your skin intact.

Some patients with lipodermatosclerosis benefit from oral medication such as aspirin or Trental. These medicines are so-called blood thinners and can help increase the circulation since this is often the main contributing factor in the condition.

As I noted above lipodermatosclerosis is a difficult condition to treat but it can often be controlled. If you have any other questions regarding the condition please do not hesitate to ask me before you leave the office.