

Surgery without the Pain

MINIMALLY INVASIVE PROCEDURES REVOLUTIONIZE VEIN REPAIR

By Dawnn Henderson

Sharon Music of Millwood, Ga., is not one to sit still for long. With three daughters, four grandchildren and a busy life, 54-year-old Music is constantly on the go.

For years, varicose veins in her legs threatened to slow her down. She ignored the pain and discomfort because she didn't want to have traditional vein-stripping surgery, a procedure that involves going under anesthesia and being off your feet for days afterward.

When Music learned that she could have her varicose veins repaired without hospitalization or general anesthesia, she was intrigued. When she learned that she would be off her feet for just one day, she was sold.

Music went to Memorial Health University Physicians—Savannah Vascular Institute in Savannah for EndoVenous Laser Treatment (EVLT). Anthony Avino, M.D., a

vascular surgeon, used laser technology to shrink and close Music's varicose veins. The entire procedure took about 45 minutes, then Music's leg was wrapped in a special stocking and she went home with instructions to take ibuprofen for any soreness she might experience. She was on her feet later that day.

"It was a breeze," says Music. "I was amazed that there was so little pain. If you can handle a little sting, you can have this done."

A month later, she returned to Avino to have the varicose veins removed from her other leg.

The Minimally Invasive Revolution

The EVLT procedure is just one of many new minimally invasive surgeries (MIS) available for vascular conditions. An MIS procedure is a surgery performed without a large, open incision on the body. Just as sophisticated as standard open procedures, MIS results in fewer complications, lower costs, shorter hospital stays, less pain, less blood loss and a faster recovery.

"Every year, we're making dramatic improvements. We can treat more-complicated and profuse diseases with MIS now," says Avino.

The most common vascular procedures that can now be performed with MIS are:

- ◆ aneurysm repair using endografts
- ◆ kidney, intestinal and carotid artery repair using stents
- ◆ angioplasty to open blocked arteries
- ◆ a laser vein-closer for varicose veins

In fact, MIS procedures are becoming so common that they're leading to an entirely new generation of surgeons called "endovascular specialists," or doctors who

Better Veins

To learn more about MIS vascular procedures, including EVLT treatment for varicose veins, contact Memorial Health University Physicians—Savannah Vascular Institute at svi.memorialhealth.com. Or, call (912) 350-VEIN (8346).



Anthony Avino, M.D.



perform procedures from inside the vein or artery.

“It has changed the way vascular surgeons are trained and how they work,” says Avino. “There’s a dramatic change in all accredited vascular training programs in this country. Half or more of the training is now minimally invasive. Five years ago, it was maybe 10 to 20 percent of training.”

Avino adds that it is a steep learning curve, but surgeons who have MIS training can offer their patients much more. “We have many more options now. Complicated open surgery is limited to select patients with severe disease,” says Avino.

Speedier Recovery

For aneurysm repair, the traditional hospital stay would be six to 13 days, compared to only one to three days with a minimally invasive endograft procedure. Angioplasty can be done in 30 minutes or three hours (depending on the severity of the blockage) and usually requires no more than an overnight stay. The varicose vein repair, as mentioned, can be done in less than an hour, with patients returning to their normal activities within a day.

For Sharon Music, the MIS laser option was the only way to go. She got rid of the pain, swelling and itching in her legs and didn’t have to miss a beat to do it. ■

Laser Surgery vs. Traditional Surgery

The information in this table is provided by EVLT. For specific information, talk to your physician.

EVLT	Traditional Vein Stripping Surgery
◆ performed in physician’s office	◆ performed in hospital or surgery center
◆ requires local anesthesia	◆ requires general anesthesia
◆ patient remains conscious	◆ patient is unconscious
◆ 93-98 percent success rate	◆ 77-82 percent success rate
◆ patients resume normal activity in 1-2 days	◆ patients resume normal activity in 4-12 days
◆ no scarring	◆ scarring from incisions at groin and knee
◆ side effects: bruising	◆ side effects: bruising and swelling