

VENICE PLASTIC SURGERY

A.E. HAAS, M.D.

Cosmetic, Reconstructive, Face, Breast, and Hand Surgery

Scleroderma

Scleroderma is another disease where the body seems to be attacking itself, much like rheumatoid arthritis and Lupus. Blood vessels and organs may fill up with unwanted extra tissues. The kidney, lungs and heart are commonly affected. The skin gets thick and blood circulation especially to the fingers may be compromised. The liver may develop into cirrhosis. Food may be impaired from moving down the digestive system. Malnourishment may occur. Cardiac involvement alone is responsible for up to 15 percent mortality in patients with full blown scleroderma.

Middle aged women are usually affected but people of any sex or age are at risk. We do not know the actual cause of the disease. The condition is progressive. It slowly worsens over time. The good news is that it may at any time stop developing. It may in rare circumstances actually reverse itself.

We see these patients in the wound clinic because healing is impaired as a direct result of the disease process and because of poor blood vessel function. Large skin wounds frequently require skin grafts. Fingers are lost as a result of Raynaud's phenomenon. This is described in detail in another article.

Wounds are further impaired at healing because one of the treatments is the use of steroid medications. The immune system is weakened resulting in more infections. Malnourishment may hinder wound healing. Obviously smoking cigarettes is bad. If the kidneys are not working well then toxins build up in the bloodstream. These are bad for the healing process. A failing heart cannot provide good circulation. You can see why we have so much difficulty with wound patients. Healing requires a cooperative effort from all your body's systems.

These patients who have many organ systems affected are among those most challenging to treat. Wound doctors are needed as are cardiac and lung specialists. Often liver, stomach and kidney physicians are called to help. We get the vascular doctors and internal medical specialists on the case. There is a coordinated effort to fight the disease process.

**The above represents the opinion of A. E. Haas, M.D.
Venice Plastic Surgery, Venice Wound Center, Lakeside Medical Center**

Just call us directly. No referral needed unless required by your insurance company

836 Sunset Lake Blvd # 103, Venice, FL 34292
(941) 492-4775