

PATIENT INFORMATION

Preventing Blood Clots in Hospital



DVT and PE – what are they?

Deep vein thrombosis (DVT) and pulmonary embolism (PE) are blood clots that form in the deep veins of the leg or pelvis (DVT) or the lungs (PE).

How serious is a blood clot?

Blood clots can be a very serious and potentially life-threatening condition.

DVTs may cause a lifelong disability with pain and swelling in the legs, varicose veins and leg ulcers.

PEs may cause pain in the chest, breathing difficulties, sudden collapse and sometimes death.

Why would I be at an increased risk of a blood clot?

Admission to hospital with an illness carries a 15% chance of getting a DVT.

There are several factors that may increase your risk of getting a DVT or PE during and after your hospital stay:

- ❖ Surgery or trauma
- ❖ Obesity
- ❖ Age over 40 years
- ❖ Cancer
- ❖ Pregnancy
- ❖ Prolonged immobility

- ❖ Personal or family history of clots or thrombophilia (sticky blood)
- ❖ Severe or ongoing infection
- ❖ Some drugs e.g. HRT
- ❖ Temporarily stopping blood thinning drugs e.g. aspirin
- ❖ Pre-existing major medical illness

How will the hospital reduce the chances of me getting a blood clot?

When you come into hospital we will assess your risk of getting a clot. We will give you the most appropriate preventative treatment depending on why you are in hospital.

Compression stockings

These are special stockings which help the blood to flow in the legs.

They may not be suitable for everyone e.g. some people with circulation problems.

If used properly stockings have been shown to reduce the risk of getting a DVT by 60% in surgical patients.

Foot pumps

Foot pumps are worn on the feet and increase the blood flow in the legs.

This method has been shown to reduce the risk of getting a DVT by up to 65%.

Injections and tablets/capsules

These medicines stop clots from forming so easily. We commonly use a daily injection, but new tablets & capsules are becoming available.

These medicines can increase the risk of bleeding.

This method can reduce the risk of getting a DVT by up to 70%.

What are the symptoms of a DVT and PE?

DVT:

- ❖ Swelling, pain and tenderness in the leg
- ❖ Warmness of the skin in the leg
- ❖ Redness of the skin in the leg

PE:

- ❖ Breathlessness / difficulty in breathing
- ❖ Chest pain / discomfort
- ❖ Bluish tinge to lips/face and extremities
- ❖ Coughing up blood-stained phlegm
- ❖ Sudden collapse

Contact your doctor or the local A&E as soon as possible if you get any of these symptoms.

How can I help myself?

Before I come into hospital:

- ❖ Keep a healthy weight
- ❖ Stop smoking

In hospital and at home:

- ❖ Drink plenty of water to keep hydrated
- ❖ Wear your stockings for 24 hours a day (except for washing)
- ❖ Wear your foot pumps as advised (hospital only)
- ❖ Take any medicines prescribed as advised
- ❖ Get up and mobilise as soon as you are advised
- ❖ Perform your exercises independently as directed
- ❖ Perform your breathing and foot and ankle exercises as directed (hospital only)

Useful Contacts

Lifeblood - The Thrombosis Charity, c/o The Thrombosis & Haemostasis Centre,
Level 1, North Wing, St.

Thomas' Hospital, London, SE1 7EH

 www.thrombosis-charity.org.uk

NICE (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence), Mid City Place, 71 High
Holborn, London, WC1V 6NA

 www.nice.org.uk

For further assistance or to receive this information in a different format, please contact the department which created this leaflet.