

Venous thromboembolic diseases: diagnosis, management and thrombophilia testing

Information for the public
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Blood clots in adults: the care you should expect

A blood clot, also called a venous thromboembolism, can be a serious condition. If it forms inside a vein (often in the leg) it's called a deep vein thrombosis, or DVT. If a piece of the blood clot travels to the lungs it can cause a blockage called a pulmonary embolism, or PE. A PE can be fatal.

It can be hard to recognise DVT or PE because the main symptoms, such as leg pain and swelling, or chest pain or breathlessness, can look like many other conditions. A scan is needed to confirm the diagnosis, but treatment should start right away if DVT or PE is suspected.

We want this guideline to make a difference to people who may have DVT or PE by making sure:

- DVT and PE are recognised and treated more quickly, both by GPs and hospital staff
- better advice is given about treating DVT or PE to help people make choices about their care
- people taking medicine to treat DVT or PE (called anticoagulants) at home know how to use their medicine and what to do if they need advice
- people who could be at risk of another DVT or PE have support to understand the pros and cons of long-term anticoagulant treatment.

Making decisions together

Decisions about treatment and care are best when they are made together. Your healthcare professionals should give you clear information, talk with you about your options and listen carefully to your views and concerns.

To help you make decisions, think about and discuss the following:

- What are the risks or downsides to treatments for blood clots and what do these mean for me?
- What are my risks of having another blood clot in the future?
- Do the benefits outweigh the risks of continuing anticoagulant treatment long term?

If you can't understand the information you are given, tell your healthcare professional.

Read more about [making decisions about your care](#).

Where can I find out more?

The [NHS website](#) has more information about blood clots.

The organisations below can give you more advice and support.

- [British Heart Foundation](#), 0300 330 3311
- [British Lung Foundation](#), 03000 030 555
- [Stroke Association](#), 0303 3033 100
- [Thrombosis UK](#), 0300 772 9603

NICE is not responsible for the content of these websites.

To share an experience of care you have received, contact your local [Healthwatch](#).

We wrote this guideline with people who have been affected by blood clots and staff who treat and support them. All the decisions are based on the best research available.

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