



Prevention of Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT) and Pulmonary Embolism (PE)

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Some people who come into hospital for treatment are at increased risk of blood clots in the veins.

What is Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT)?

- If we cut ourselves, the blood can naturally form a clot to stop the bleeding. Sometimes an unwanted clot can form in a vein deep within the leg and this is called a deep vein thrombosis (or DVT for short)
- Symptoms of a DVT include pain, stiffness and aching in the calf or thigh, leg swelling and changes in skin colour

What is Pulmonary Embolism (PE)?

- A pulmonary embolism (or PE) is when part of a clot (from a DVT) breaks off and travels to the lungs where it blocks the blood vessels. It can be very serious, sometimes fatal if not treated
- Symptoms of a PE include sudden onset of breathing difficulty (even when resting) and chest pain (may be worse on breathing in)

What are the risk factors for DVT and PE?

Just being unwell and in hospital can increase your risks but these are some specific risk factors

- Age over 60
- Immobility
- Surgery lasting more than 60 minutes
- A previous history of DVT or PE in yourself or close family members
- Being overweight
- Having cancer

- Being medically unwell with heart failure, respiratory failure or an inflammatory bowel or joint problem
- Being on the oestrogen containing oral contraceptive pill or HRT (please discuss with your medical team whether to stop this prior to admission)

Please inform your medical team if you are planning any long journeys before or after admission.

When you go home from hospital

The risk of developing blood clots can continue for up to 12 weeks after you have gone home.

- Make sure that you remember to walk around as much as you are able
- Keep hydrated, drink enough water
- When you are resting, as much as possible – raise your leg. This reduces the pressure in the calf veins, and helps to prevent blood and fluid from ‘pooling’ in the calves. ‘Raised’ means that your foot is higher than your hip so gravity helps with blood flow returning from the calf. The easiest way to raise your leg is to recline on a sofa with your leg up on a cushion
- If you have been asked to wear support stockings at home, please wear them for the recommended time (they can be taken off and washed regularly)

Some patients may be considered at very high risk and their consultant may decide that they need to go home on blood thinner injections. Some patients are able to give this injection to themselves; others have theirs from the district nursing service.

If you have any questions or concerns after you have gone home from hospital please contact:

Ward on 0121

or your own G.P. surgery.

Further Information

For further information about DVT and PE, please see our video guide: www.uhb.nhs.uk/hospital-acquired-dvt.htm

This shows you how deep vein thrombosis and pulmonary embolism are caused, and demonstrates the symptoms.



The Trust provides free monthly health talks on a variety of medical conditions and treatments. For more information visit www.uhb.nhs.uk or call 0121 627 7803

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