

Are you at risk of a Deep Vein Thrombosis in hospital?

We have written this leaflet for all hospital in-patients to explain how the risk of a blood clot can be reduced. It does not replace explanations and information given to you by our staff but we hope you will find it a helpful guide to use before, during and after your stay in hospital. If you have any questions or need any further information please do not hesitate to ask your doctor or nurse.

What is a blood clot or deep vein thrombosis (DVT)?

Deep vein thrombosis (DVT) is the name given to a blood clot which forms inside a vein. Typically these clots form inside the veins of the leg, interrupting blood flow and making the leg swollen and painful.

Sometimes these clots can break off and become lodged in one of the arteries in the lung. This is called pulmonary embolism (PE) and can cause pain, breathlessness, and lack of oxygen in the blood which can be fatal.

DVT may also cause life long problems such as painful swollen legs, varicose veins and ulcers. It is estimated that 25,000 people who are admitted to hospital in the UK die from preventable blood clots each year.

DVT and PE are known together as venous thromboembolism (VTE).

Am I at risk of a blood clot?

A blood clot is more likely to happen when you are not moving around very much. When you are inactive for longer than normal, blood tends to collect in the lower parts of your legs. The blood moves around the body more slowly and can trigger a blood clot (also known as a thrombus).

If you are unwell and confined to bed and / or recovering from major surgery you are at a higher risk than normal of developing a blood clot.

Other factors may increase your risk such as:

- You or a member of your family has had a blood clot before
- You are having an operation
- You are unable to move around
- You are over 60 years of age

The prevention of infection is a major priority in all healthcare and everyone has a part to play.

- **Please decontaminate your hands frequently for 20 seconds using soap and water or alcohol gel if available**
- **If you have symptoms of diarrhoea and/or vomiting, cough or other respiratory symptoms, a temperature or any loss of taste or smell please do not visit the hospital or any other care facility and seek advice from 111**
- **Keep the environment clean and tidy**
- **Let's work together to keep infections out of our hospitals and care homes.**

- You are obese (you have a body mass index of 30 or more)
- You have long standing problems with your heart and lungs
- You have had a recent heart attack or stroke
- You have cancer or have had recent chemotherapy
- You are on the combined contraceptive pill, or hormone replacement therapy (HRT)
- You are currently pregnant or have recently given birth
- You have inflamed varicose veins
- You have a disorder that makes your blood more likely to clot
- You have certain other health problems, for example, some types of infections, inflammatory bowel disease or rheumatic conditions
- If you are having an operation, you may be more at risk if you take a long journey in the 4 weeks before or after your operation
- How will my risk be assessed?

The Department of Health has made the prevention of VTE a priority across the NHS. When you are admitted to hospital you will be assessed for your risk of developing a blood clot using a list of risk factors similar to those listed previously. If necessary, you will be given preventative treatment.

This recommendation was made by the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE). For more information, read NICE's 2018 guideline Venous Thromboembolism in over 16s: Reducing the risk of hospital acquired deep vein thrombosis or pulmonary embolism. [nice.org.uk/guidance/ng89](https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng89)

What can I do to reduce the risk of developing a blood clot before I come into hospital?

- Keep mobile - move around as much as possible in the weeks leading up to your surgery
- Take care on journeys - if you can, avoid long uninterrupted journeys of over three hours in the month before your surgery. If you do need to travel on long journeys either by coach, train or air, try to move your legs regularly. If travelling by car, have a break and walk around every one to two hours
- Medication - If you are planning to have an operation your healthcare team will advise you if any of your usual medicines should be stopped before you have your operation.

When I come into hospital can I do anything to reduce my risk of developing a blood clot in hospital?

There are a number of things you and your healthcare team can do to help reduce your risk of blood clots while in hospital.

- Make sure that you do not become dehydrated
- Also make sure that you start to move around as soon as you are able to.

Depending on your risk factors you may also be offered:

- Compression stockings or a compression device, to help keep the blood in your legs circulating
- and / or

- Anticoagulant medicine, which helps prevent blood clots.

Compression stockings can be either knee length or thigh length, and fit tightly to encourage your blood to flow more quickly around your body. It is important that these are worn correctly.

Compression devices are inflatable and work in the same way as compression stockings, inflating at regular intervals to squeeze your legs and encourage blood flow.

Anticoagulant medicine helps to reduce the risk of blood clots. This will most often be given in the form of a once or twice daily injection called enoxaparin, usually given into the stomach. Patients who have had a planned hip or knee operation may also be offered an oral medicine as an alternative.

What happens when I leave hospital?

You may need to continue treatment with compression stockings and / or an anticoagulant medicine when you leave hospital. Before you leave, your healthcare team should advise you on how to use your treatment, how long it should continue for, and who to contact if you are having any problems.

Once you are well enough, it is important that you try to move around or do leg exercises as soon as possible. Also avoid taking long journeys for four weeks after you come out of hospital.

How do I tell if I might have a blood clot?

Signs to look out for after your hospital treatment include:

- Unexplained pain or swelling in your leg
- The skin of your leg feels hot or tender, or is discoloured (red, purple, blue)
- Your feet are numb or tingling
- The veins near the surface of your leg appear larger than normal
- You become short of breath
- You feel pain in your chest or upper back or ribs which is worse when you breathe in deeply
- You cough up blood.

If you experience any of the above symptoms, seek medical help immediately from your GP or hospital.

If you develop a blood clot, medication is very effective in treating the problem.

Where can I find more information?

If you have any concerns you should speak to any healthcare professional on your ward.

Other useful contacts

New Cross Hospital VTE Nurse

Mobile via Switchboard: 01902 307999

NHS 111

NICE

www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng89

English

If you need information in another way like easy read or a different language please let us know.

If you need an interpreter or assistance please let us know.

Lithuanian

Jeigu norėtumėte, kad informacija jums būtų pateikta kitu būdu, pavyzdžiui, supaprastinta forma ar kita kalba, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

Jeigu jums reikia vertėjo ar kitos pagalbos, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

Polish

Jeżeli chcieliby Państwo otrzymać te informacje w innej postaci, na przykład w wersji łatwej do czytania lub w innym języku, prosimy powiedzieć nam o tym.

Prosimy poinformować nas również, jeżeli potrzebowaliby Państwo usługi tłumaczenia ustnego lub innej pomocy.

Punjabi

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ, ਜਿਵੇਂ ਪੜ੍ਹਨ ਵਿਚ ਆਸਾਨ ਰੂਪ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਦੂਜੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ, ਚਾਹੀਦੀ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਦੁਭਾਸ਼ੀਏ ਦੀ ਜਾਂ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

Romanian

Dacă aveți nevoie de informații în alt format, ca de exemplu caractere ușor de citit sau altă limbă, vă rugăm să ne informați.

Dacă aveți nevoie de un interpret sau de asistență, vă rugăm să ne informați.

Traditional Chinese

如果您需要以其他方式了解信息，如易读或其他语种，请告诉我们。

如果您需要口译人员或帮助，请告诉我们。