

Reducing your risk of blood clots while you are in hospital and recovering at home

Information for patients

This leaflet tells you about blood clots and what you can do to reduce your risk of developing them.



Specialist support

If you require this leaflet in another language, large print or another format, please contact the Health Information Centre tel: (023) 9228 6757, who will advise you.

What causes blood clots?

Blood needs to clot to stop an injury or cut from bleeding. This is a complex process and sometimes it can go wrong. When this happens, a clot can form in the wrong place, usually in the deep veins of the leg. This is called a deep vein thrombosis or DVT.

A DVT blocks the normal flow of blood through the vein and can cause tenderness, pain, redness and swelling.

Sometimes a piece of the clot can break off and travel to the lungs. This is called a pulmonary embolism or PE. PEs can cause pain in the back, chest or shoulder, feeling faint and problems with breathing.

Who gets blood clots?

Anyone can get a DVT or PE, but some people are more at risk than others. The following things can increase the risk of blood clots:

- Being unwell and less mobile than usual
- Pregnancy or recently having given birth
- Contraceptive pill or hormone replacement therapy (HRT)
- Having an operation
- Being over weight
- Smoking
- A personal or family history of blood clots
- A serious illness such as cancer
- A blood clotting disorder
- Major injury such as a broken leg or hip
- Lower limb plaster cast
- Long distance travel
- Being dehydrated

How can I reduce my risk of getting a blood clot?

There are certain things that you can do for yourself to reduce your risk of a blood clot:

- Drink lots of fluids (unless advised otherwise)
- Move around as much as possible

If you are not able to walk around, exercise your ankles while you are in bed or sitting in the chair. The more you do this the better.

How can healthcare staff help?

Your doctor or nurse will assess you when you come into hospital. They may not need to do anything more than encourage you to do the things listed above.

If you are more at risk there are other things they may do:

- They may give you some elastic stockings to wear, these help to keep your blood moving
- They may fit you with calf or foot pumps which squeeze your leg or calf intermittently to improve your blood flow
- They may give you a daily injection or tablet to thin your blood and stop it from clotting

You may need to continue these after you go home.

When you go home from hospital

You may still be at risk of getting a blood clot while you are getting better.

You can help prevent this by following the advice in this leaflet. Keep drinking lots of fluids (unless you are told not to) and stay as active as possible.

You will be told if you need to continue any injections or tablets or to continue to wear stockings after you go home.

Seek medical advice from your GP straight away if you are worried about any new symptoms such as leg or chest pain, leg swelling or breathing problems after you go home.

What happens if you do develop a blood clot?

Sometimes blood clots happen even if all possible steps are taken to prevent them. If you do get a blood clot, your GP or hospital doctor will make sure that you are given the right treatment.

If you get a blood clot within three months of your hospital stay, we will look at your case to make sure that all the right things were done to help prevent it. If this happens to you and you would like to know what we find when we review your case, please contact us either by:

Email: vte@porthosp.nhs.uk

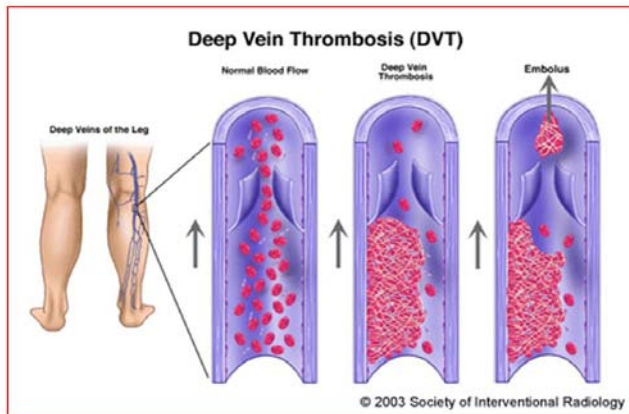
or by telephoning the Risk Management Department: 023 9228 6000, Ext 3478 (Mon – Fri 9am - 4pm only)

Please Note: Staff in the Risk Management Department will take your details only, a doctor or nurse will then contact you to discuss your case further.

Further information

If you have any questions while you are in hospital, please ask your ward nurse, doctor or pharmacist.

For more information about blood clots and how to prevent them, log onto:



www.thrombosis-charity.org (Lifeblood: The Thrombosis Charity)
www.nhs.uk (NHS Choices)

Consent – What does this mean?

Before any doctor, nurse or therapist examines or treats you they must have **your consent** or permission. Consent ranges from allowing a doctor to take your blood pressure (rolling up your sleeve and presenting your arm is implied consent) to signing a form saying you agree to the treatment or operation.

It is important before giving permission that **you understand** what you are agreeing to. If you do not understand – ask.

Information we hold about you and your rights under the Data Protection Act - Please refer to the booklet 'Your Healthcare Information – Your Rights! Our Responsibilities!' for further guidance.

How to comment on your treatment

We aim to provide the best possible service and staff will be happy to answer your questions. However, if you have any concerns you can also contact the Patient Experience Service on 0800 917 6039 or E-mail PALS@porthosp.nhs.uk

This leaflet is based on the 'Preventing blood clots while you are in hospital and recovering at home' leaflet from University Hospital's Leicester.

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