

Reducing your risk of developing a blood clot

This information leaflet is for patients who are being sent home from the Emergency Department or Urgent Care Centre with a lower limb plaster cast, splint or walker boot. If you have any questions or concerns, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.

What is deep vein thrombosis (DVT)?

DVT is a blood clot that has formed in one of the deep vessels. It usually occurs in your leg or pelvis. By itself it is not life threatening, however, sometimes the blood clot can become dislodged and travel to your lungs. This is called a pulmonary embolism (PE) and can be very serious.

Who is at risk of developing DVT?

You may be at risk of developing a blood clot (deep vein thrombosis) if your mobility (movement) is reduced for a period of time and you have any risk factors.

Risk factors for DVT include:

- being over 60
- smoking
- being dehydrated
- being on the oral contraceptive pill
- being on hormone replacement therapy (HRT)
- being overweight
- having cancer
- receiving cancer treatment
- having underlying "sticky blood" (a condition that makes your blood more likely to clot)
- inflamed varicose veins (phlebitis)
- previous blood clots or a family history of blood clots
- being pregnant or having recently given birth
- having a chronic medical condition (heart or lung disease, diabetes)

What are the signs and symptoms of DVT?

- New pain in your leg
- New swelling in your leg
- Warm or discoloured skin to the legs.

If you experience any of these symptoms you should contact your GP or local Emergency Department. You may find our leaflet **Deep vein thrombosis** useful – please ask a member of staff for a copy.

What are the signs and symptoms of a pulmonary embolism?

- Breathlessness
- Pain in your chest, back or ribs that is worse when you breathe in
- Coughing blood

If you experience any of these symptoms you should return to hospital as soon as possible or dial 999 in an emergency. You may find our leaflet **Pulmonary embolism** useful – please ask a member of staff for a copy.

How can my risk of developing DVT be reduced?

Your doctor or nurse will have assessed your individual risks but you can reduce your risk by doing these things:

- Stay active as much as possible. If you are unable to walk, try to move your legs, ankles and feet around as much as possible.
- Drink regular fluids to avoid becoming dehydrated (unless advised otherwise).

Will I be prescribed a treatment to reduce the risk of DVT?

Sometimes the doctor or nurse will discuss with you other ways to reduce your risk of developing a blood clot. This may include prescription of an anticoagulant. An anticoagulant is a medicine (taken as a tablet or sometimes as an injection) that prevents the blood from clotting as quickly as normal. If you require an injection of anticoagulation, the doctor or nurse will give you further advice on how to carry this out safely.

If you have an injection, you may experience some discomfort and bruising around the injection site. This will recover when the injections stop. It is rare to have problems with bleeding after the injection. If you develop any abnormal bleeding, contact your GP or in an emergency attend your nearest Emergency Department.

Giving my consent (permission)

We want to involve you in decisions about your care and treatment. If you decide to go ahead, you will be asked to sign a consent form. This states that you agree to have the treatment and you understand what it involves.

If you would like more information about our consent process, please speak to a member of staff caring for you.

Useful sources of information

The following websites offer information and advice:

NHS Choices: www.nhs.uk/conditions/deep-vein-thrombosis

Lifeblood – The Thrombosis Charity: www.thrombosisuk.org

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, please call the Emergency Department at St Thomas' Hospital on 020 7188 2127 (24 hours).

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets

Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.

t: 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

t: 020 7188 8801 (PALS) **e:** pals@gstt.nhs.uk

t: 020 7188 3514 (complaints) **e:** complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk

Language Support Services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch:

t: 020 7188 8815 **e:** languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk

NHS 111

Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day.

t: 111

NHS Choices

Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make choices about your health.

w: www.nhs.uk

Get involved and have your say: become a member of the Trust

Members of Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust contribute to the organisation on a voluntary basis. We count on them for feedback, local knowledge and support. Membership is free and it is up to you how much you get involved. To find out more, and to become a member:

t: 0800 731 0319 **e:** members@gstt.nhs.uk

w: www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/membership