

Reducing your risk of developing a blood clot

You have been given this information sheet because you 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 blood 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 DVT 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 or obese
- having cancer
- receiving cancer treatment
- having underlying 'sticky blood' (a condition that makes your blood more likely to clot)
- having inflamed varicose veins (phlebitis)
- having had previous blood clots or having a family history of blood clots
- being pregnant or having recently given birth
- having a chronic medical condition (such as heart or lung disease, or diabetes).

What are the signs and symptoms of DVT?

- New pain in your leg
- new swelling in your leg
- warm or discoloured skin on the leg.

If you experience any of these symptoms you should contact your GP or local Emergency Department (A&E). 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 up 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 risk but you can reduce your risk by:

- staying as active as possible – if you are unable to walk, move your legs, ankles and feet around as much as you can
- drink plenty of 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 given as an injection) that prevents the blood from clotting as quickly as normal. If you require an injection of anticoagulation medicine, 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 (A&E).

Consent - asking for your consent

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.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, please call the Emergency Department at St Thomas' Hospital, **t: 020 7188 2127** (24 hours).

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

NHS website

w: www.nhs.uk/conditions/deep-vein-thrombosis-dvt/

Thrombosis UK

w: www.thrombosisuk.org/

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