Blood Clots (reducing the risks)

Information for patients

This leaflet explains how we reduce the risks of deep vein thrombosis (DVT) and pulmonary embolism (PE) during and after your stay in hospital.
What are blood clots?

Your blood has a mechanism that normally forms a blood clot (plug) to stop the bleeding when you are injured (e.g. when you have a cut). Sometimes this mechanism can go wrong and forms a blood clot without an injury, which can reduce the blood supply to the affected area.

This is called venous thromboembolism (VTE), which can happen:

In a vein of the leg causing a deep vein thrombosis (DVT)

and

If the DVT becomes loose, it can travel to the lungs causing a pulmonary embolism (PE). This condition can be fatal.
Who is at risk?

If measures are not in place to prevent blood clots, around 10-40% of patients admitted to hospital will develop a DVT but it could be as many as 60% in certain specialties like orthopaedic surgery. The risk varies from patient to patient.

For this reason, all patients admitted to hospital should have an assessment for their risk of developing a VTE. The following table shows a list of risk factors, check which ones apply to you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VTE Risk Factors</th>
<th>Related to You</th>
<th>Related to your Admission to Hospital</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age over 60</td>
<td>Tick</td>
<td>Being unwell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being overweight</td>
<td></td>
<td>Infection / Sepsis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having cancer and cancer treatment</td>
<td></td>
<td>Reduced activity / periods in bed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having disorders (e.g. such as diabetes, asthma, high cholesterol, heart disease, …)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Having an operation (specially on your tummy or orthopaedic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dehydration</td>
<td></td>
<td>Having an anaesthetic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pregnancy or 6 weeks post birth</td>
<td></td>
<td>Having a plaster cast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You or your family member having a blood clot in the past</td>
<td></td>
<td>Being in intensive care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking the contraceptive pill or HRT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How to reduce the risk?

General recommendations:

Stay Active

Drink Plenty

Foot and Leg Exercises
Prescription Only:

Anti-embolism stockings and leg cuffs

Medication (injection or tablets)
If you have risk factors and have not been given stockings and/or medication to prevent blood clots, let the doctor know straight away.

You should not be offered stockings/leg cuffs and anti-clotting medication if you have the following conditions
(tick the ones that apply to you)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No stockings / leg cuffs</th>
<th>Tick</th>
<th>No medication (injection or tablets)</th>
<th>Tick</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poor circulation on your legs</td>
<td></td>
<td>If you are bleeding</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severe leg swelling</td>
<td></td>
<td>Low platelet count</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heart Failure</td>
<td></td>
<td>(less than 50)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skin problems on the leg (dermatitis, skin graft, fragile skin)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Poor kidney function</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor sensation on your legs</td>
<td></td>
<td>Recent spinal, brain or eye operations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>If you are already taking anticlotting medication</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(check with your doctor if in doubt)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Are there possible complications?

Be aware of the following uncommon complications of the treatment:

**Anti-embolism stockings and leg cuffs**

This can happen if not sized and applied correctly

- Skin marking
- Wounds
- Discomfort

(legs should be measured, heel pocket centered on heel, not rolling down):

**Medication (injection or tablets)**

- Allergy (e.g. rash)
- Extreme bruising or bleeding (e.g. nosebleeds, in the urine or stools, from surgical wounds, heavy periods internal bleeding)
- Extreme tiredness or pallor

If this happens, let your nurse and doctor know. If you have been discharged please phone your GP.
How do you know if you get a blood clot?

If you suspect you have a DVT call your GP ASAP!

If you suspect you have a PE call 999 immediately!
Advice for when you leave the hospital

It is estimated that you will still be at risk of getting a blood clot up to 3 months after being discharged.

That is why it is so important to keep following the general advice from “How to Reduce the Risk” on this leaflet. In addition to that, the doctor may or may not prescribe you antiembolism stockings and / or medication to go home with.

*If you are discharged with antiembolism stockings:*
*(this is common if you have significantly reduced mobility expected to last 3 days or more after discharge):*

- ✓ Ask your nurse your leg measurements and size:
  
  Calf width____ cm    Leg length____cm    Size ____

- ✓ Make sure they fit correctly (heel pocket on the heel, not rolling down)

- ✓ Wear them all day and all night (take 2 pairs, for laundry requirements)

- ✓ Always remove them every day for 30mins – this is a must to check for complications (see section ‘Are There Possible Complications’)

- ✓ Wear them until you are back to your normal activity level

- ✓ Remove them and call your GP if you have any issues or complications
If you are discharged with anticoagulant medication:
(this is common after hip and knee replacement, ankle fractures, if you have
cancer and an operation or if you had a previous blood clot, however, other cases
may require it too):

✔ Make sure you take it as prescribed
✔ Take it every day at the same time/times
✔ Do not miss any doses
✔ Keep an eye out for bleeding (see section ‘Are
there any possible complications’ on this leaflet)
✔ Any problems with your anti-clotting medication,
contact your GP immediately
Useful information:
Buckinghamshire Hospitals Trust Patient Medicines Helpline: 01296 31 6197

Venous thromboembolism in over 16s: reducing the risk of hospital-acquired deep vein thrombosis or pulmonary embolism

https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng89

Use NHS services
Reducing the risk of deep vein thrombosis (DVT) for patients in hospital.
https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng89

Other useful websites
www.nhs.uk/conditions/deep-vein-thrombosis

www.patient.co.uk

Download the App
Preventing VTE (found in Google Play)
How can I help reduce healthcare associated infections?

Infection control is important to the well-being of our patients and for that reason we have infection control procedures in place. Keeping your hands clean is an effective way of preventing the spread of infections. We ask that you, and anyone visiting you, use the hand rub (special gel) available at the main entrance of the hospital and at the entrance to every ward before coming in to and after leaving the ward or hospital. In some situations hands may need to be washed at the sink using soap and water rather than using the hand rub. Staff will let you know if this is the case.

www.buckshealthcare.nhs.uk

If you require an interpreter or need a document in another language, large print, Braille or audio version please ask for assistance.

Figure 1: https://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pulmonary_embolism
Figures 2, 3, 4 and 8: www.pixabay.com
Figure 5: https://www.finavia.fi/en/newsroom/2017/easy-flight-exercises-prevent-deep-vein-thrombosis
Figure 6: www.compressionstocking.co
Figure 7: www.djoglobal.eu
Figures 9 and 10: https://cancerclot.info/