

- you have a chronic illness, such as lung disease or heart failure, or inflammatory disease, such as ulcerative colitis
- you are pregnant or have been pregnant in the last six weeks

Am I at increased risk of bleeding?

If any of the following apply to you please tell your doctor as it will affect your treatment plan:

- you are taking anticoagulant drugs such as warfarin
- you are taking medication which affects blood clotting, such as aspirin or clopidogrel, and some painkillers
- you have haemophilia or another known bleeding disorder
- you have a low platelet count
- you have a history of major bleeding or bleeding peptic ulcer
- you have a family history of major bleeding
- you have recently had a stroke
- you have very high blood pressure
- you have severe liver or kidney disease

Blood clots and long distance travel

All forms of long distance travel can increase your risk of developing blood clots.

Your risk of developing DVT or PE after a long distance flight is quite low. However, it can be increased if you have other risk factors listed in this leaflet.

If you have any concerns about travel, your hospital stay or your risk of developing DVT or PE, please talk to your doctor.

For a video guide to DVT and PE visit:
www.uhb.nhs.uk/hospital-acquired-dvt.htm

How do I make a comment about my visit?

Please either speak to a member of staff or contact the patient advice and liaison service (**PALS**) on **020 3313 0088** (Charing Cross, Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's & Chelsea hospitals), or **020 3312 7777** (St Mary's and Western Eye hospitals). You can also email PALS at **imperial.pals@nhs.net**. Alternatively, you may wish to complain by contacting our complaints department: Complaints department, fourth floor, Salton House, St Mary's Hospital, Praed Street London W2 1NY
Email: **ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net**
Telephone: **020 3312 1337 / 1349**

This leaflet can be provided on request in large print or easy read, as a sound recording, in Braille or in alternative languages. Please email the communications team:

imperial.patient.information@nhs.net

WRU2845

Preventing deep vein thrombosis and pulmonary embolism

Information for patients, relatives and carers

Introduction

This leaflet explains how to prevent deep vein thrombosis (DVT) and pulmonary embolism (PE) both at home and in hospital. If you have any questions about this information please speak to your doctor.

What are DVT and PE?

Thromboses are blood clots that tend to occur in the deep veins of the legs (DVT) or in the lungs (PE). They can have serious health consequences.

How can I reduce my risk of thrombosis?

Before coming to hospital

Read the list of risk factors in the 'Am I at increased risk of thrombosis?' section and tell your doctor if any of them apply to you.

Discuss stopping hormone supplements before surgery with either your doctor or GP, as these can increase your risk of thrombosis. Hormone supplements include the oral contraceptive pill, hormone replacement therapy (HRT) or tamoxifen.

When you are in hospital

Your risk of developing hospital-associated thrombosis (HAT) and your risk of bleeding from treatment should be assessed by medical staff when you're admitted to hospital. Where needed, preventative treatment should be started within 14 hours.

Treatments may include blood-thinning injections like heparin, anti-embolism stockings or pneumatic compression devices (leg cuffs).

Please read the 'Am I at increased risk of bleeding?' section to find a list of risk factors for bleeding. It is **essential** that you tell your doctor if any of them apply to you.

You **must** also tell your hospital team if you have had an allergic reaction to heparin in the past. Heparins are of animal origin so if this is an issue for you please speak to your doctor.

In some cases, a blood-thinning tablet may be used after hip or knee surgery instead of injections.

When you go home

If you are at a particularly high risk of thrombosis we will advise you to continue taking blood-thinning injections, tablets or stockings when you leave hospital. We will give you a supply to take home. It is important you understand and follow the instructions for use and disposal of these treatments correctly.

For most patients moving around, staying hydrated and getting back to normal activities as soon as possible will be enough to reduce their risk of thrombosis.

Is there anything I should look out for at home?

If you develop any of the following symptoms contact your GP or the hospital immediately for advice:

- unexplained swelling or discomfort in your legs from the calf upwards
- chest pain
- breathing difficulties
- a painful cough

If tests confirm that there is a blood clot we will give you anticoagulation (blood-thinning) medication.

Am I at increased risk of thrombosis?

If any of the following risk factors apply to you please tell your doctor as it may affect your treatment plan:

- you have had DVT or PE in the past
- other members of your family have had blood clots
- previous blood tests suggested that you are at increased risk of thrombosis
- you are having treatment for cancer, such as chemotherapy or radiotherapy, or you have cancer which is not in remission