

# Preventing Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT)

**If you need this leaflet in a different language or accessible format  
please speak to a member of staff who can arrange it for you.**

اگر به این بروشور به زبان دیگر یا در قالب دسترس پذیر نیاز دارید،  
لطفاً با یکی از کارکنان صحبت کنید تا آن را برای شما تهیه کند.

Jeśli niniejsza ulotka ma być dostępna w innym języku lub formacie,  
proszę skontaktować się z członkiem personelu, który ją dla Państwa przygotuje.

Dacă aveți nevoie de această broșură într-o altă limbă sau într-un format accesibil,  
vă rog să discutați cu un membru al personalului să se ocupe  
de acest lucru pentru dumneavoastră

如果您需要本传单的其他语言版本或无障碍格式，请联系工作人员为您安排。

إذا احتجت إلى هذه النشرة بلغة أخرى، أو بتنسيق  
يسهل الوصول إليه، يرجى التحدث إلى أحد الموظفين لترتيب ذلك لك.

## Introduction

The risk of developing a thrombosis may be increased during a hospital stay for various reasons. It can cause pain, discomfort and lead to long term problems in the limbs and lungs. It may even be fatal.

We have written this leaflet to explain how the risk of developing a venous thromboembolism (see below) can be reduced.

It does not replace explanations and information given to you by our staff, but we hope it is a helpful guide to use before, during and after your stay in hospital. If you have any questions or need further information, please ask a member of staff.

### What is a thrombosis?

When we cut ourselves we bleed, to prevent us from bleeding too much, the body triggers a protective blood clotting mechanism and a scab forms on our skin. Sometimes, a clot can occur inside a blood vessel rather than on the skin. When this happens, it can slow down the flow of blood in that part of the body.

### What is a venous thromboembolism?

Venous Thromboembolism (VTE) can be a deep vein thrombus, Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT) or a Pulmonary Embolism (PE).

Typically, these clots form inside the veins of the leg, blocking the blood flow and making the leg swollen and painful (DVT). Sometimes clots break off and travel and become lodged in one of the arteries of the lung (PE). This is potentially a serious problem, which can create a PE. This can cause pain, breathlessness and lack of oxygen in the blood.

### Reducing the risks before surgery

#### There are many risks of developing a VTE

Nearly everyone who comes in to hospital, are at an increased risk, especially if you are going to have an operation or are unwell and confined to your bed. Many other factors may increase your risk. Such as a previous history of a thromboembolism in either yourself or in the family. Conditions such as cancer, heart failure, respiratory disease and some medication e.g. certain contraceptive pills, HRT etc. can increase the risk.

You may be asked questions to check for known risk factors. Depending on the outcome of the assessment, you might be offered treatment to keep your risk of developing a VTE whilst in hospital as low as possible.

### Talk to your doctor if you are taking the contraceptive pill or Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT)

These medications may increase your risk of a VTE and so your doctor may advise you to stop taking them in the weeks leading up to surgery. Your clinical team will assess your risk of VTE and consider what can be done to reduce this.

### Moving around

In some cases, this will be the only measure you need to take. Sit out in a chair and mobilise as early as possible or when your allowed to, regularly take deep breaths and where possible, move your feet and ankles to improve circulation

### Anti-embolism stockings

These are also known as compression stockings which have been shown to reduce the risk of VTE. You will need to be measured to ensure you get the right size.

### Medication

If you are at a fairly high risk of developing a VTE, then you may be given medication which stops the blood from clotting too quickly. This drug is normally prescribed in injection form and given to you under the skin, once or twice a day.

Do not cross your legs in bed.

### Is there anything else I can do?

#### Stay hydrated

Dehydration causes blood to become thicker and more viscous, as well as causing blood vessels to narrow and blood to clot more readily. Drink plenty of fluids to keep you well hydrated (unless advised not to take oral fluids by medical staff or the clinical team).

#### Stop smoking

Smoking damages all blood vessels. Try to stop smoking. Help is available within the hospital from the inpatient smoke free team 0151 290 4848, or email at:

[inpatientsmokefreeteam@merseywestlancs.nhs.uk](mailto:inpatientsmokefreeteam@merseywestlancs.nhs.uk)

#### Maintain a healthy Body Mass Index (BMI)

Being overweight reduces the flow of blood through the vessels. Try to lose weight .

### What are the possible signs or symptoms of a VTE?

- Unexplained pain or swelling in your legs
- Chest pain when you breathe
- Breathlessness
- Coughing up blood

### What to do if you experience any of the above symptoms:

- Inform your ward team immediately so they can assess you and take prompt actions.

## After you have left hospital

Sometimes the medical staff will recommend that preventative VTE treatment be continued after discharge from hospital.

### With pharmacological VTE prevention

Please adhere to the information given on the patient information leaflet provided with your take home medication.

If you encounter a problem using any VTE treatment at home, please seek advice from a member of the ward clinical team.

### With anti-embolism stockings

Only use the stockings that were provided for you and that you were measured for and fitted with.

Ensure you know how to put the anti embolic stocking on correctly, to ensure a reduction in the risk of developing a VTE. (A trained member of the clinical staff will be happy to go through this process with you).

Wear the stockings day and night until your mobility is not still significantly reduced.

Remove stockings daily for hygiene purposes and to inspect skin condition. If you have significant reduction in mobility, poor skin integrity or sensory loss, the skin should be inspected two or three times per day, especially over heels and bony prominences.

Discontinue the use of stockings if there is marking, blistering or discolouration of the skin, particularly over heels and bony prominences, or if you have pain or discomfort, seek medical advice.

### When should I seek medical help?

Leg swelling, redness or pain can be signs of a blood clot. Although these symptoms are not always due to a DVT, they should never be ignored.

- If you have **leg swelling, redness or pain:**  
Contact or visit your **GP** for assessment.
- If you develop **breathing difficulties, chest pain, sudden shortness of breath, or cough up blood:**  
Seek urgent medical attention immediately; by going directly to the **hospital**.

If you have any questions or would like any more information, please ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.

**Useful telephone numbers:**

Whiston Hospital 0151 426 1600

Southport and Formby 01704 547 471

Ormskirk Hospital 01695 577 111

Stop Smoking Helpline (Sefton) 0300 100 1000

Stop Smoking Helpline (West Lancashire) 0800 328 6297

Whiston Hospital  
Warrington Road,  
Prescot, Merseyside, L35 5DR  
Telephone: 0151 426 1600

Southport Hospital  
Town Lane, Kew,  
Southport, Merseyside,  
PR8 6PN  
Telephone: 01704 547 471

St Helens Hospital  
Marshalls Cross Road,  
St Helens, Merseyside, WA9 3DA  
Telephone: 01744 26633

Ormskirk Hospital  
Dicconson Way, Wigan Road,  
Ormskirk, Lancashire, L39 2AZ  
Telephone: 01695 577 111