

If you experience symptoms such as:

- Sudden or gradual breathlessness
- Chest pain (often when you take a breath in)
- Suffer from a collapse

SEEK IMMEDIATE EMERGENCY MEDICAL TREATMENT as these symptoms can be a sign of a Pulmonary Embolism (PE), a serious condition that may occur when the clot has moved to the lungs.

Resuming normal living activities after your operation

In practice, it is unlikely that you will suffer from a DVT either while in hospital or on your return home. However, there are certain precautions that you can continue to take after discharge:

- Be active (but don't overdo it!) – returning to light exercise is one way of reducing the risk of a DVT
- If fitted with anti-DVT stockings, continue to wear as instructed
- Continue to take blood-thinning medicines that have been prescribed for you as instructed

Travelling after surgery

If you are at risk of clot formation or have suffered from a DVT while in hospital, you should consult your GP before going on any long distance travel, such as long distance plane, train, or car journeys (journeys of six hours or more).

Ensure that you:

- Drink plenty of water before you travel
- Avoid excessive alcohol intake
- Avoid sleeping tablets on the trip
- Perform simple leg exercises, and if possible take short walks
- Wear elastic compression stockings.

Acknowledgements

NHS Clinical Knowledge Summaries – Patient Information leaflet – Deep Vein Thrombosis



Preventing Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT) or Pulmonary Embolism (PE) following Orthopaedic Surgery

A guide for patients

Who is at risk?

All patients undergoing an orthopaedic operation are at risk of suffering a DVT or PE, but as explained in the next section, all possible precautions are taken to reduce this risk.

As a patient you can help yourself by:

- Stopping or reducing smoking
- Losing weight if overweight or obese
- Keeping as fit and active as you can before your admission.

How do we prevent a blood clot or DVT forming after surgery?

A blood clot in the veins of the leg or pelvis is called a thrombosis. After surgery, you are at increased risk of developing a clot in the veins of your leg. The medical name for this is a Deep Vein Thrombosis or DVT.

Many small clots do not require treatment. However, in a very small percentage of cases, the clot may leave the leg veins and travel to the lungs causing a 'pulmonary embolism' or PE. Steps are always taken to reduce the risk of a blood clot.

You will be assessed of this risk at the Pre-Admission Clinic or before surgery, and dependent on this assessment, you may be given one or more of the following treatments:

- A blood-thinning agent such as aspirin or something similar, which you may be asked to take before, and for some time after, your operation
- Elastic compression stockings, worn immediately before, and for some time after, your discharge
- Foot pumps (that help to push blood round your legs) may be fitted immediately after the operation and until you are out of bed.

All of these measures, taken individually or together, will significantly reduce the risk of suffering from a DVT while you are in hospital

After your operation, we will show you how to perform regular circulation exercises that prevent the blood flow from becoming sluggish and we will also encourage you to get up from your bed as quickly as possible after the operation. This action also reduces the risk of a DVT forming.

Doctors and nurses will also be observing you closely and will take immediate action if they see any of the possible symptoms of a DVT

What happens when I go home?

You will be given advice on the range and frequency of exercises that you should do before you are sent home; it is important to continue with these exercises.

While a certain amount of leg swelling is normal after an operation, if you notice any of the following symptoms you should contact your GP.

Symptoms may include:

- Pain, swelling and tenderness in one of your legs (usually in the calf area)
- A heavy ache in the affected leg
- Warm, red, tender skin at the back of the leg below the knee.

Once the diagnosis has been confirmed, treatment will be given, usually by the administration of a drug that will thin the blood quickly and reduce the effects of the clot.