

Preventing blood clots in hospital: What you should know

Patient Information Sheet

What is a DVT?

A blood clot forms to help stop bleeding. Sometimes a clot forms when it is not needed. This usually happens in the deep veins of the legs. These blood clots are called deep vein thrombosis, or DVT for short.

What is a PE?

When a piece of a blood clot breaks off, it can travel to the lungs. This is called a Pulmonary Embolism, or PE for short.

What is a VTE?

Venous Thromboembolism (VTE) describes a blood clot that can be either a DVT or PE.

What are some symptoms you could experience if you had a blood clot?

If you experience a blood clot the symptoms could include:

- sudden redness, swelling or pain in one leg or arm
- trouble breathing
- feeling short of breath
- coughing up blood
- chest pain

Blood clots are serious and can be life threatening. Tell your healthcare team if you have any of the above symptoms.

How can you reduce your risk of blood clots?

Any patient in hospital is at risk for developing a blood clot and patients undergoing surgery are at highest risk.

Staying active reduces the risk of getting a blood clot. Move your legs often and walk as soon as your healthcare team tells you it is safe to do so.

You may be given a pair of compression stockings to wear to help blood flow. Surgical patients may be given sequential compression devices that act as a pump to help blood flow better. If you have been given these devices, you should use them.

Depending on your risk level, you may be given “blood thinning” medication to prevent clots. This medication can be given to you as a pill or with a needle.

If you would like more information about blood clots, or your risks, speak to your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist.