

TRAVEL RELATED BLOOD CLOTS / THROMBOSIS

WHAT IS DEEP VEIN THROMBOSIS (DVT)?

DEEP VEIN THROMBOSIS (DVT) REFERS TO THE PRESENCE OF A BLOOD CLOT IN THE DEEP VEINS OF THE BODY (USUALLY THE LEG)



IS DVT DANGEROUS?

WHILE A DVT CAN GIVE YOU A SORE LEG IT IS NOT IN ITSELF DANGEROUS. THE DANGER COMES IF A PIECE OF CLOT BREAKS OFF AND GOES TO THE LUNG. THIS IS CALLED A PULMONARY EMBOLISM (PE) AND CAN BE FATAL



IS DVT MORE LIKELY WITH TRAVEL?

WHEN SEATED FOR LONG PERIODS (> 4HRS), THE BLOOD IN THE DEEP VEINS CAN BECOME STATIC. THIS INCREASES THE RISK OF DVT. THIS RELATES NOT ONLY TO AIR TRAVEL BUT ANY MODE OF TRANSPORT WHERE YOU REMAIN SEATED / INACTIVE FOR LONG PERIODS (E.G. CAR, TRAIN)



SHOULD I WEAR COMPRESSION STOCKINGS OR TAKE BLOOD THINNERS?

FOR MOST PEOPLE THERE IS NO NEED TO WEAR COMPRESSION STOCKINGS OR TAKE BLOOD THINNERS, SIMPLE MEASURES (SEE REAR OF THIS SHEET) ARE ALL THAT ARE REQUIRED.

SOME HIGHER RISK INDIVIDUALS MAY BENEFIT FROM COMPRESSION HOSIERY OR BLOOD THINNERS. IF YOU HAVE ANY OF THE HIGHER RISK CONDITIONS LISTED ON THE REAR OF THIS SHEET, YOU SHOULD DISCUSS YOUR TRAVEL PLANS WITH YOUR DOCTOR.



WHAT CAN I DO TO REDUCE THE RISK OF DVT?

ON LONG JOURNEYS (> 4HRS), IT IS IMPORTANT TO USE SIMPLE MEASURES TO PREVENT THE BLOOD IN THE LEGS BECOMING STATIC (SEE REAR OF THIS SHEET).

TRAVEL RELATED BLOOD CLOTS / THROMBOSIS

SIMPLE MEASURES TO AVOID DVT

- Exercise your calf and foot muscles regularly:
 - Every half hour or so, bend and straighten your legs, feet and toes when you are seated.
 - Press the balls of your feet down hard against the floor or foot rest every so often. This helps to increase the blood flow in your legs.
 - Take a walk up and down the aisle every hour or so, when the seatbelt signs are not switched on.
 - Take all opportunities to get up to stretch your legs, when there are stops in your journey.
- Drink normal amounts of fluid to avoid dehydration.
- Avoid alcohol. (Alcohol can cause dehydration and immobility.)
- Avoid taking sleeping tablets or other sedative drugs, which cause immobility.

HIGHER RISK CONDITIONS

- Previous thrombosis (DVT or PE)
- Overweight (BMI > 30)
- Active malignancy (Cancer)
- Recent major surgery (< 1 mth)
- Recent child birth
- Pregnancy
- Use of Hormone Replacement Therapy
- Use of Combined oral contraceptive pill
- Immobility e.g. Casted or splinted limb

If any of the above conditions apply to you, see your Doctor before your travel. You may benefit from additional measures to reduce your risk of travel related thrombosis.

SYMPTOMS OF DVT / PE

Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT)

Unexplained swelling, pain, tenderness, redness or excessive warmth in a limb (usually the leg)

Note it is usual to get mild, painless, puffiness of the feet and ankles after flying. This does not indicate thrombosis

Pulmonary Embolism (PE)

Unexplained shortness of breath

Chest pain (particularly that worsens with deep breathing)

Fainting or collapse

If you develop any of the above symptoms then seek urgent medical review