

**Patient
Information**

Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT)

Introduction

You have been given this leaflet because it is suspected that you have a Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT).

What is a DVT?

A DVT is a blood clot in one of the deep veins in the body. When you injure yourself, your body forms blood clots, as a way of protecting you from losing blood. Sometimes this can go wrong, resulting in blood clots forming inside your veins, which interrupts the normal flow of blood.

Potential causes of a DVT

The most common risk factors are:

- Being over the age of 65 years
- Reduced activity such as not walking for long periods when on a long car journey
- Being on oral contraception (the pill), HRT (Hormone Replacement Therapy), or being pregnant
- Having some medical conditions such as cancer or having chemotherapy
- Having a family history of DVT or Pulmonary Embolism (PE)
- If you have had a previous DVT or PE

Symptoms of a DVT

- Pain, swelling and tenderness in one of your limbs (usually your calf)
- Skin feeling warm in the area of the clot
- Redness (where the pain is)

Treatment

It is important that a DVT is treated to prevent any of the clots moving through the veins in your body and getting lodged in the blood system in your lungs. This is called a Pulmonary Embolism (PE) and can be very serious.

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Symptoms of a PE

- Chest pain that is sharp and worsens when you take a deep breath in
- Unexplained shortness of breath
- Upper back pain
- Coughing or coughing up blood
- Fainting
- Feeling as though you have an irregular heartbeat

If you have any of these symptoms you need to seek urgent medical attention.

Contact the Emergency Services, telephone 999 immediately and ask for an ambulance.

How do we find out if you have a DVT?

D Dimer - this is a blood test that measures how sticky your blood is.

If it is within a normal range, it is unlikely you will have a DVT. If the test shows a higher level of stickiness you will be referred for an ultrasound scan of your leg.

Ultrasound - the sonographer will scan from the top of your leg (the groin), along the inside of your thigh, behind your knee and into your calf.

If we are trying to rule out an upper limb DVT the sonographer will scan your neck, upper chest and whole arm on the affected side.

After the scan the clinician will discuss the results with you and advise you about the next steps.

Treatment

If your scan is positive (shows a DVT), you will be assessed as to which method of treatment you need.

There are 3 different types of anticoagulants (blood thinners) available which include a daily injection or tablets.

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Side effects

As with all medicines, you may have side effects from the anticoagulant. This may cause bleeding. Simple cuts or bruises can bleed excessively. You should seek immediate medical attention if you have any of the following:

- Continued or heavy bleeding
- Tiredness
- Dizziness
- Severe headache

If at any time you develop pains in your chest, become short of breath or cough up blood, you should contact the Emergency Services, telephone 999 and inform them that you are being treated for a DVT.

Your safety

- You should avoid taking any other medicines unless prescribed by a doctor who knows that you are taking anticoagulants.
- Always tell your GP, nurse, dentist or pharmacist that you are taking anticoagulants.
- Let your GP and hospital staff know immediately if you think that you are pregnant or are planning to become pregnant.

Exercise

Gentle exercise such as walking or swimming is good for you. Try to avoid contact sports and any other sports which may cause injury or bruising while you are taking anticoagulants.

Contact information

If you have any questions or concerns about your treatment, please do not hesitate to contact one of the following:

Same Day Emergency Care Unit (SDEC)

Gloucestershire Royal Hospital

Tel: 0300 422 6677 or 6676

Monday to Friday, 8:00am to 11:00pm

Bank holidays and weekends, 8:00am to 9:00pm

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Ambulatory Emergency Care

Cheltenham General Hospital

Tel: 0300 422 3618

Monday to Friday, 8:00 am to 6:00 pm

Further information

The following websites offer information and advice:

NHS Choices

Website: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/deep-vein-thrombosis-dvt/>

Thrombosis UK

Website: www.thrombosisuk.org

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