



Venous Thromboembolism (VTE) Patient Information Clontarf Hospital

What is Venous Thromboembolism?

Venous thromboembolism (VTE) occurs when clots form in blood vessels. When the clots form in deep veins, such as in the legs or groin these are referred to as deep vein thrombosis (DVT). If a part of the clot breaks off, it can travel through the blood and lodge in the main blood vessels (arteries) of the lung, causing a pulmonary embolism (PE), which can be very serious. VTE is easily preventable and this leaflet explains who is at a higher risk of VTE and what can be done to prevent it.

Who is at risk of developing VTE?

You are more at risk of developing VTE in hospital if one or more of the factors below apply to you.

- You are undergoing major surgery.
- You are aged over 60.
- You have long periods of not moving or reduced mobility.
- You are on certain medications such as hormone replacement therapy (HRT), oral contraception, tamoxifen, raloxifene and chemotherapy.
- You are pregnant or have given birth within the last 6 weeks.
- You have cancer or are receiving cancer treatment.
- You are overweight or obese.
- You have had a previous VTE or there is a family history of VTE.
- You are dehydrated.
- You have an inherited or acquired blood clotting problem.
- You have a serious medical illness or a disease of the blood.
- You have more than one medical condition, such as heart disease, diabetes or respiratory illness.
- You have travelled long-haul (for journeys where you sit for longer than 4 hours) within 4 weeks before or after hospital admission.

How can VTE be prevented?

In your admission and pre-operative assessments, your individual risk of developing a VTE is assessed and you will be given appropriate preventative measures according to the level of risk of forming a clot and risk of bleeding.

How can VTE be prevented?

The treatments include:

- *Medication:* Anticoagulants (drugs that prevent clotting) may be used. Some patients may need to continue with the medication after they leave hospital and if this is necessary your nurse will explain the procedure.
- *Anti-embolism stockings:* You may be fitted with stockings to reduce damage to leg veins and encourage the return of blood to the heart while you are immobile. You may need to wear these for a time after surgery. Your nurse will advise you on this.

The ways in which you can help prevent VTE include:

- Eat a balanced diet.
- If you are overweight, try to lose some weight before you come into hospital if it is a planned admission.
- Drink plenty of fluid. Dehydration is a risk factor for VTE.
- Mobilising and exercises. Movement is important and aids recovery after surgery.

How do I know whether I have VTE?

Many people with VTE have no symptoms at all. The most common symptoms include:

- Pain, tenderness and swelling of the calf.
- Mild fever, with heat in the area of the thrombosis (blood clot).
- Redness.
- Shortness of breath.
- Chest pain when breathing.

Is there a treatment for VTE?

Treatment for a VTE is with anticoagulants. These are medicines that thin the blood significantly. Your treatment will depend on your age, weight, medical history, medications and lifestyle factors.

More information about VTE.

Speak to your nurse, doctor or pharmacist if you have any concerns or questions. See also: - <http://www.hse.ie/eng/health/az/T/Thrombosis/> and <http://www.thrombosisireland.ie/resources.html>