

# Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT)

## Information for patients

This information sheet explains deep vein thrombosis (DVT) and why you have been prescribed anticoagulant medication. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to speak to the nurse or doctor caring for you.

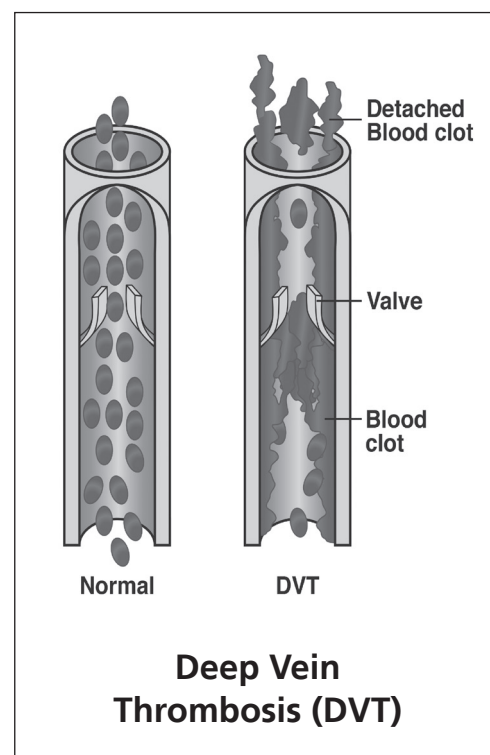
### What is deep vein thrombosis (DVT)?

A DVT is a blood clot (thrombus) in a deep vein, usually in your leg. You can also get them in veins in other parts of your body, such as your arm.

When a DVT develops, the blood flow through the vein is either partially or completely blocked by a blood clot. This can cause your affected limb to become painful, red and swollen.

### Are there any complications?

If a piece of the blood clot breaks off from the DVT, it can travel through your bloodstream to your lungs, where it blocks one of the blood vessels. This blockage is called a **pulmonary embolism (PE)**. A PE can cause you to cough up blood-stained spit, have chest pain and feel short of breath.



DVT and PE are known together as venous thromboembolism (VTE).

If you have had a DVT, you can develop a long-term condition called post-thrombotic syndrome. Symptoms can range from mild to severe and include: calf pain, discomfort, swelling and rashes. If it is severe, you can develop ulcers.

## What causes DVT?

Your blood usually flows quickly through the veins in your leg because of the squeezing action of your muscles as you move. This stops a clot from forming.

DVTs can sometimes develop for no apparent reason, but there are several things that make you more likely to develop one. These include:

- having a stroke
- having active cancer
- using the oral contraceptive pill
- using hormone replacement therapy
- pregnancy
- trauma
- reduced mobility caused by having a major operation, an illness or injury, or long journeys where you cannot get up and move around
- a family history of DVT and PE
- having a DVT / PE before.

## How are DVTs treated?

You have been prescribed anticoagulant (often referred to as blood-thinning medication). These make your blood take longer to clot and you take them to stop your body from forming more blood clots.

Anticoagulants will not break down any blood clots. Your body does this naturally over a period of time.

## When taking anticoagulants it is important to:

- Take medication regularly at the same time each day
- Keep all clinic appointments
- Keep your anticoagulant alert card with you at all times
- Let your doctor know if you become pregnant or are planning on becoming pregnant.

### If you experience any of the following symptoms please seek medical attention

- Chest pain
- Shortness of breath
- Bleeding cuts that won't stop
- Nose bleeds that won't stop
- Sudden change in your health,
- Bleeding gums
- Unexpected bruising that won't stop
- Blood in vomit or sputum
- Blood in urine or faeces, or black faeces

## Follow up appointments

Date: ..... Time: .....

Date: ..... Time: .....

## **King's College Hospital**

DVT Clinic

Monday – Friday, 9am – 5pm

Tel: 07623 901822

(the operator will ask for a call sign, answer 'DVT1')

Anticoagulation clinic

Monday – Friday, 9am – 4pm

Tel: 020 3299 5553

## **The Princess Royal University Hospital**

DVT Clinic

Monday – Friday, 8.30am – 4.30pm

Tel: 01689 864273

Anticoagulation clinic

Monday – Friday, 9am – 4pm

Tel: 01689 864263

### **Where can I find more information?**

You can speak to your thrombosis team if you have questions or need advice. A wealth of information can be found on the Thrombosis UK website ([thrombosisuk.org](http://thrombosisuk.org)) and the 'Lets Talk Clots' patient information app.



App Store



Google Play Store

### **PALS**

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) is a service that offers support, information and assistance to patients, relatives and visitors. They can also provide help and advice if you have a concern or complaint that staff have not been able to resolve for you. They can also pass on praise or thanks to our teams.

PALS at King's College Hospital, Denmark Hill, London SE5 9RS:

Tel: 020 3299 3601 Email: [kch-tr.pals@nhs.net](mailto:kch-tr.pals@nhs.net)

You can also contact us by using our online form at [www.kch.nhs.uk/contact/pals](http://www.kch.nhs.uk/contact/pals)

PALS at Princess Royal University Hospital, Farnborough Common, Orpington, Kent BR6 8ND:

Tel: 01689 863252 Email: [kch-tr.palskent@nhs.net](mailto:kch-tr.palskent@nhs.net)

If you would like the information in this leaflet in a different language or format, please contact PALS on 020 3299 1844.