

Superficial Vein Thrombosis (SVT)

Information for patients

This information leaflet provides information on superficial vein thrombosis (SVT) and its management. If you have any queries or concerns, please speak to your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.

What is a superficial vein thrombus (SVT)?

An SVT is a blood clot (thrombus) in a superficial vein. These are veins near the surface of your skin and SVT usually occur in the legs, but you can also get them in superficial veins in other parts of your body, such as your arms.

When an SVT develops, the flow through the vein is either partially or completely blocked. This can cause visible hardening of the vein, with redness of the skin over the vein and surrounding area.

Are there any complications?

If the blood clot continues to grow and extend into a deep vein, this is called deep vein thrombosis, and you would experience increased pain and swelling in the leg (or the affected area). Blood clots in deep veins can break off and travel to your lungs, where they can block the blood vessels supplying blood to the lungs. 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.

Whilst being treated for a SVT, if increasing leg symptoms occur or you have signs of PE you should attend the Emergency Department.

What causes SVT?

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

There are several reasons why you might develop SVT. These include:

- having varicose veins
- having previous vein problems – i.e. Thrombophlebitis/DVT

- having active cancer
- trauma
- pregnancy
- a family history of DVT/PE
- reduced mobility caused by having a major operation, an illness or injury, or long journeys where you cannot get up and move around

How are SVTs treated?

Depending on the extent and underlying risk factors, you may receive treatment with non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs NSAIDs (i.e. Ibuprofen), or anticoagulants (often referred to as blood-thinning medication), for a short period of time.

Anticoagulants make your blood take longer to clot and you take them to stop your body from forming more blood clots. The DVTclinic will advise you regarding the best option for you.

Treatment 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
- Sudden change in your health
- Bleeding gums
- Unexplained or severe bruising
- Blood in vomit or sputum
- Blood in urine or stools, or black stools

Following the completion of therapy

Once you have completed the treatment for your SVT, in the future if you develop recurrent signs or symptoms of SVT, or any signs or symptoms of a DVT or PE, you should seek medical attention.

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

Sharing your information

We have teamed up with Guy's and St Thomas' Hospitals in a partnership known as King's Health Partners Academic Health Sciences Centre. We are working together to give our patients the best possible care, so you might find we invite you for appointments at Guy's or St Thomas'. To make sure everyone you meet always has the most up-to-date information about your health, we may share information about you between the hospitals.

Care provided by students

King's is a teaching hospital where our students get practical experience by treating patients. Please tell your doctor or nurse if you do not want students to be involved in your care. Your treatment will not be affected by your decision.

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.

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

Tel: 020 3299 3601

Email: kch-tr.palsdh@nhs.net

You can also contact us by using our online form at www.kch.nhs.uk/contact/pals

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

Tel: 01689 863252

Email: kch-tr.palspruh@nhs.net

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