



Suspected Pulmonary Embolism (PE)

Information for patients

This leaflet explains what to expect if you are being diagnosed of a suspected pulmonary embolism.

What is Pulmonary Embolism (PE)?

PE is the term used to describe one or multiple blood clots that block blood vessels in the lung and stop blood flow to parts of the lung.

Risk factors

Main risk factors for blood clots include:

- age
- previous history of blood clots
- surgery or serious injury within the last three months
- pregnancy
- long haul flights or car journeys lasting more than six hours
- the combined oral contraceptive pill
- a period of inactivity such as a hospital stay
- active malignancy (cancer)
- other disabling conditions such as heart or respiratory failure, clotting disorders etc.

PE diagnosis

In order to diagnose a PE, a scan will be organised which will create images of the blood vessels in the lungs to identify any clots. This is usually a CT (Computed Tomography) scan which includes contrast (a dye) being injected into a vein to make the blood vessels visible on the scan. In a small number of patient's a different scan called a VQ scan will be arranged.

Ambulatory Pathway for PE investigation:

If imaging cannot be arranged for the same day, you will be assessed to see if you are suitable for the ambulatory (outpatient) PE pathway. To be suitable, you need to have a stable blood pressure, heart rate and oxygen levels, and have a low risk of complications if you do have a PE. You will be given treatment and sent home, and you will be followed up within the next few days.

Treatment with anticoagulation:

Until we can either confirm or exclude a PE, you will be offered an anticoagulant (often referred to as a 'blood-thinner') which can be given as a tablet or an injection.

If you need pain relief, Paracetamol is safe with anticoagulants. Before taking Aspirin or non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs such as Ibuprofen you should consult your doctor.

Is there anything I should look out for at home?

You should seek medical advice immediately if you develop:

- severe central chest pain or severe breathlessness
- loss of consciousness or dizziness on exertion
- an injury to the head, with or without loss of consciousness
- bleeding from your bowels or when you pass urine

- if your bowel motions become black (this can be a sign of bleeding from the gut)
- prolonged nosebleeds or any other bleeding of concern.

Emergency contacts

For life-threatening emergencies call 999

For urgent medical help, that isn't an emergency call 111

For more information:

If you have been referred to the Ambulatory Care Unit at King's College Hospital, you will be given a time and date for your assessment prior to leaving the hospital. If you need to reschedule or contact the Ambulatory Care Unit (ACU) please call between 8am and 8pm, seven days a week on the following numbers:

Tel: 020 3299 6261 or 020 3299 9960

Confirming your identity

Before you have a treatment or procedure, our staff will ask you your name and date of birth and check your ID band. If you do not have an ID band we will also ask you to confirm your address. If we do not ask these questions, then please ask us to check. Ensuring your safety is our primary concern.

MyChart

Our MyChart app and website lets you securely access parts of your health record with us, giving you more control over your care. To sign up or for help, call us on 020 3299 4618 or email kings.mychart@nhs.net. Visit www.kch.nhs.uk/mychart to find out more.

Care provided by students

We provide clinical training 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. They can also pass on praise or thanks to our teams. The PALS office is located on the ground floor of the Hambleton Wing, near the main entrance on Bessemer Road - staff will be happy to direct you.

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

Tel: 020 3299 4618

Email: kings.pals@nhs.net

If you would like the information in this leaflet in a different language or format, please contact our Interpreting and Accessible Communication Support on 020 3299 4618 or email kings.access@nhs.net