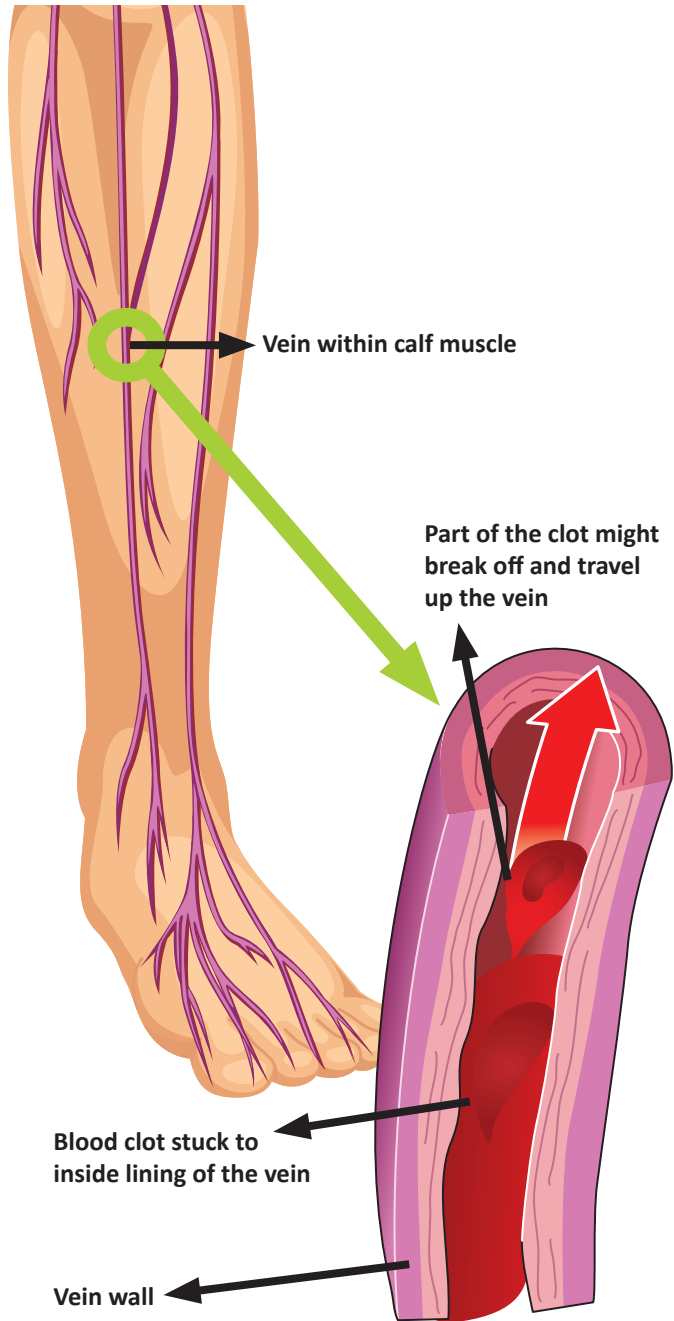


Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT)



Preventing deep vein thrombosis (DVT)

Information about reducing the risk of blood clots in your legs or lungs while in hospital

What is Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT)?

A DVT is a blood clot that may form in one of the large veins of the body. DVTs happen more commonly in the legs.

The blood clot may partly or completely block the flow of blood in that vein. This may cause pain, redness and/or swelling.

Some of the clot may travel through the veins to the lungs. This is called a pulmonary embolus. A pulmonary embolus can block the blood supply to the lungs and slow the supply of oxygen to the rest of the body.

When are you at risk of a Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT)?

Blood clots can occur because the flow of blood slows down when people cannot move about freely.

A few examples of where you may not be able to move around freely would be:

- after an accident or surgery
- being immobilised in hospital for any reason
- travelling for long periods in an airplane or motor vehicle

Other potential risk factors include:

- increasing age – though young people can also get blood clots
- history of blood clots (you, your immediate family or close relative)
- being overweight

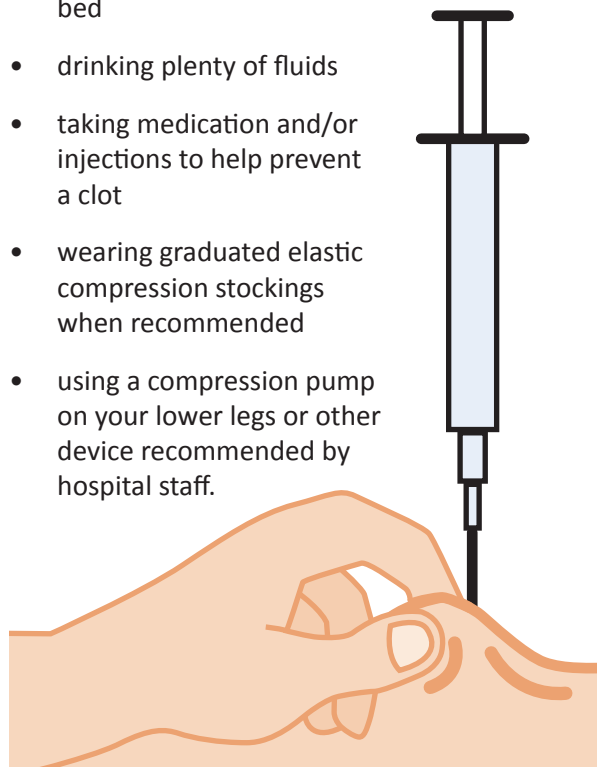
- cancer
- severe heart or lung disease
- oral contraceptive pills or hormone replacement therapy.

Reducing the risks

When you come into hospital your level of risk for developing a deep vein thrombosis (blood clot) will be assessed and treatment options will be discussed with you.

These may include:

- getting out of bed and walking about as soon and as often as possible
- gently exercising your feet and legs while in bed
- drinking plenty of fluids
- taking medication and/or injections to help prevent a clot
- wearing graduated elastic compression stockings when recommended
- using a compression pump on your lower legs or other device recommended by hospital staff.



What you can do to help

While in hospital you can help reduce the risk of a blood clot forming by:

- making sure you take any medication that has been prescribed for you.
- wearing your compression stockings if recommended.
- walking as often as your doctor or nurses advise.



What you should watch for

- Pain or swelling in your legs.
- Pain in your chest.
- Difficulty breathing.

When you have left hospital, if you notice any of the above signs, telephone your family doctor or go straight to an emergency clinic or hospital emergency department.

If you have any questions or want more information, please talk with your doctor or nurse.