

DVT Clinic Advice Leaflet

NAME:

You have been referred to the Ambulatory Care Unit (ACU) for further investigation into a suspected diagnosis of DVT. Please attend the ACU department at your allocated appointment time.

DATE:

TIME:

Due to the urgent nature of the ACU and the follow up care necessary, patients attending will be at different stages of assessment and treatment and have been allocated staff according to their treatment status. Please allow up to 3 hours for this initial appointment.

Information for Patients with Suspected DVT

A Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT) occurs when a blood clot forms in a vein, most commonly in the leg but they can occur also in an arm vein. The vein may be partially or completely blocked.

What are the signs of DVT?

DVT can be difficult to diagnose. The symptoms can appear suddenly and may vary from:


- pain in the area of the clot
- swelling of the affected limb
- tenderness in the affected limb
- redness or discolouration
- difficulty weight bearing on the leg

Who is most at risk?

Those most likely to develop a DVT are people who:

- are aged over 40 years
- have had a blood clot in the past
- have an inherited clotting tendency or have a family history of blood clots
- have an existing health problem such as some cancers or blood diseases
- have undergone previous treatment for cancer, heart disease or recent surgery
- are pregnant or recently had a baby or women who are taking the oral contraceptive pill or hormone replacement therapy
- are overweight

Some people do not have any of the above risk factors but still develop DVT.



Why are DVTs a cause of concern?

A serious complication of DVT is pulmonary embolism (PE). Part of the blood clot causing the DVT may separate off and travel via the heart to the lungs and lodge in one of the blood vessels. The symptoms of PE may include:

- severe shortness of breath
- a rapid heart beat
- a sharp pain in the chest or ribs which is worse on breathing
- dizziness
- coughing blood

PE is not common but it can be life-threatening and requires urgent medical attention.

What are the causes of DVT?

Blood usually flows through the veins without clotting. A blood clot develops when the blood cells start to stick together. There are 3 factors that may trigger a clot to form in a vein; a reduced flow of blood through a vein (this may occur as a result of immobility due to illness or surgery), changes to the clotting mechanism of blood, or changes to the smooth lining of the blood vessel wall caused by trauma, fracture or inflammation.

Treatment of DVT

Treatment is necessary to:

- Prevent the blood clot extending up the vein
- Reduce the risk of PE
- Relieve the severe symptoms of DVT
- Prevent post-thrombotic syndrome (PTS)

Treatment will include anticoagulation drugs such as heparin and warfarin, leg elevation and fitting of compression hosiery to prevent PTS.

Heparin

This is used in the initial treatment period and also prior to having a scan to prevent clotting. It is given daily as an injection under the skin for an average of 5-7 days. The dose of heparin is calculated by body weight.

Warfarin

This is also used to prevent clotting, this is an oral drug and is given alongside the heparin but only after a DVT has been diagnosed and is used in the long term treatment of DVT.

