

## PATIENT INFORMATION

# Prevention of Thromboembolism - Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT) and Pulmonary Embolism (PE)



## **Prevention of Venous Thromboembolism-Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT) and Pulmonary Embolism (PE)**

This guide is intended to help you understand about the risk of Venous Thromboembolism (VTE). These are blood clots that can form in your body and you will be more at risk if you are in or have been recently discharged from hospital. They are commonly known as a Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT) or Pulmonary Embolism (PE)

### **What is a DVT?**

A DVT is the name given to a blood clot that has formed in the deep veins, usually of the leg.

### **What is a PE?**

A PE is a blood clot that has broken off a DVT and has travelled to the lungs. It is important to reduce the risk of a DVT to prevent PE.

### **Who is at risk of DVT?**

A DVT is more likely to happen if you:

- are over 60
- are overweight
- smoke
- have had DVT before
- take the contraceptive pill or HRT
- have cancer or heart failure
- have varicose veins
- have significantly reduced mobility such as after an operation, following lower limb injury or during long distance travel.
- have been admitted to hospital with a significant illness

Whilst in hospital your doctors will assess your risk and discuss with you any treatment needed to prevent a VTE.

## **What can I do to reduce my risk of VTE?**

If your hospital admission has been planned several weeks in advance there are some precautions that you can take:-

1. Stop medications under the supervision of your physician or surgeon such as hormone replacement therapy or contraceptive pill.
2. Avoid long journeys and flights lasting more than 3-4 hours.
3. Maintain a healthy weight.
4. Increase your fitness levels if possible.
5. Stop smoking
6. Stay hydrated

## **What happens in hospital?**

You will be asked to mobilise as soon as it is safe to do so to improve the circulation and blood around the deep veins of the legs and maintain strength and co-ordination. You should also stay well hydrated by drinking plenty of fluids if you are able. You may be prescribed compression stockings to help your blood circulate and an anticoagulant (anti-clotting) injection or tablet. The injection is given just under the skin, usually in the abdomen. These measures will help minimise the risk of you getting a blood clot.

## **How can I minimise my risk of VTE following discharge from hospital?**

To minimise the risk of a blood clot forming after discharge you should continue to wear your stockings until you return to your normal level of mobility and continue with the full course of anticoagulant injections or tablets if you have been sent home with them. Please remember to discard any needles, safely in the sharps box provided.

## **How will I know if I have a DVT or PE?**

DVT commonly presents with a swollen and painful leg. The leg can also be red and warm to the touch. It rarely affects both legs.

PE commonly presents with chest pain which is often worse on breathing in deeply (pleuritic chest pain), feeling short of breath, a fast heart rate and coughing up blood.

You should seek urgent medical attention from your GP or local emergency department if you have any of these symptoms and if you are unwell call the emergency services on 999.

**If your symptoms or condition worsens, or if you are concerned about anything, please call your GP, 111, or 999.**

### **Patient Experience**

We know that being admitted to hospital can be a difficult and unsettling time for you and your loved ones. If you have any questions or concerns, please do speak with a member of staff on the ward or in the relevant department who will do their best to answer your questions and reassure you.

### **Feedback**

Feedback is really important and useful to us – it can tell us where we are working well and where improvements can be made. There are lots of ways you can share your experience with us including completing our Friends and Family Test – cards are available and can be posted on all wards, departments and clinics at our hospitals. We value your comments and feedback and thank you for taking the time to share this with us.

### **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)**

If you have any concerns or questions about your care, we advise you to talk with the nurse in charge or the department manager in the first instance as they are best placed to answer any questions or resolve concerns quickly. If the relevant member of staff is unable to help resolve your concern, you can contact the PALS Team. We offer informal help, advice or support about any aspect of hospital services & experiences.

Our PALS team will liaise with the various departments in our hospitals on your behalf, if you feel unable to do so, to resolve your problems and where appropriate refer to outside help.

If you are still unhappy you can contact the Complaints Department, who can investigate your concerns. You can make a complaint orally, electronically or in writing and we can advise and guide you through the complaints procedure.

### **How to contact PALS:**

**Telephone Patient Services: 0300 123 1732 or via email at: [wah-tr.PET@nhs.net](mailto:wah-tr.PET@nhs.net)**

### **Opening times:**

The PALS telephone lines are open Monday to Thursday from 8.30am to 4.30pm and Friday: 8.30am to 4.00pm. Please be aware that a voicemail service is in use at busy times, but messages will be returned as quickly as possible.

If you are unable to understand this leaflet, please communicate with a member of staff.