

## IF YOU HAVE ANY CONCERNS, SPEAK TO YOUR GP IMMEDIATELY OR SEEK URGENT ATTENTION

### For Ambulance or urgent telephone assistance

Tel: 000

### Emergency Medical Advice

Tel: 1300 60 60 24 (Nurse on call)

### Patient enquiries






Tel: (03) 9231 2211

Developed in combination with the SVHM VTE Steering Committee and Director of Emergency, May 2019



**ST VINCENT'S  
HOSPITAL**  
MELBOURNE  
A FACILITY OF ST VINCENT'S HEALTH AUSTRALIA

St Vincent's  
PO Box 2900 Fitzroy  
VIC 3065 Australia  
(03) 9231 2211  
[www.svhm.org.au](http://www.svhm.org.au)

 St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne  
 @StVincentsMelb  
 @stvincentsmelbourne  
 St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne  
 St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne

*Inspired  
by  
You*

# Prevention of Blood Clots and DVTs

Information for patients

## WHAT IS A DVT?

A deep vein thrombosis (DVT) is a blood clot that forms in a deep vein, and can partially or totally block the blood flow. It can occur anywhere but is most often seen in the leg. If it is not treated, it can cause long term symptoms like pain, swelling, rashes or permanently damage the limb. The clot can sometimes break off and travel to your lungs where it can block the blood flow to your lungs. Without blood, the lungs cannot send oxygen to the rest of your body, and you may die.

## WHY IS THE RISK OF BLOOD CLOTS HIGH IN HOSPITAL?

1. Not moving increases your risk of blood clots. Your muscles move the blood around your body. When you are resting your blood flow can become slow and a clot can form.
2. The body protects itself from bleeding. When you have an injury or surgery, the body can make the blood clot more easily to stop any blood loss.

## WHO IS AT RISK?

- Patients who have had major surgery or an injury and cannot walk often.
- People who have had previous clots in the vein; or have a close family member who has had a clot
- People over 60 years of age- the risk increases as you get older
- People who are overweight or obese
- People with active cancer
- People who smoke
- People who have varicose veins
- Women who are using the contraceptive pill or hormone replacement therapy (HRT)
- Women who are pregnant or who have just had a baby
- People with a condition called thrombophilia, which makes the blood clot more easily.
- Any other serious medical illness such as, heart or renal failure, lung disease or bowel disease
- Any recent hospital admission

## HOW DO I REDUCE MY RISK IN HOSPITAL?

- Ask your medical team about your level of risk of developing a blood clot.
- It is important to follow your medical team's treatment instructions
- Treatment options may include wearing compression stockings, using compression pumps on your lower legs, and/or taking medications to help prevent a clot.
- Walk as often as your doctor or nurse advises.
- Avoid sitting or lying in bed for a long time. If in bed, move your knees and toes as often as possible.
- Drink plenty of WATER
- STOP smoking

## WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I GO HOME?

Before your leave hospital, ask your doctor or nurse:

- How long to wear your compression stockings

- Whether you must use any medications
- What physical activity you need to do
- Ask the pharmacist for an information sheet if you have not been given one.
- It is important you follow your medical team's instructions to lower your risk of getting a clot.

## WHEN SHOULD YOU SEEK ADVICE?

If you have any of the following symptoms when you are in hospital or when you go home, tell the doctor or nurse immediately; or go to the closest emergency department straight away.

- Lots of PAIN, SWELLING, REDNESS and HEAT in your legs
- Pains in the chest, hard to breathe, feeling dizzy
- Blood when you cough may be a sign of a DVT called a Pulmonary Embolism (PE), which is very dangerous. A large clot in the lung is very serious and could cause death.