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Email: [awp.pals@nhs.net](mailto:awp.pals@nhs.net)

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Avon and Wiltshire Mental  
Health Partnership  
NHS Trust

# Reducing the risk of Venous Thromboembolism (VTE)

*Also known as:*  
**Deep-Vein Thrombosis  
(DVT) and Pulmonary  
Embolism**

**Information for service users and carers**

## What is a thrombosis or embolism?

In our blood, there are various substances to prevent bleeding if we are injured. These work together to allow the blood to coagulate and form a clot to stem the flow.

In some circumstances, the blood can coagulate inside a blood vessel and the resulting clot is known as a 'thrombus'.

If a piece of the clot breaks off and moves around the bloodstream causing a blockage somewhere else, it is called an 'embolism'.

## Deep vein thrombosis

A deep vein thrombosis (DVT) typically forms in the lower leg causing pain and swelling of the limb.

If a bit of this breaks away, it can move around the circulation, via the heart to the lungs. If it lodges in the lungs it is called a pulmonary embolism and this can be fatal.

You are more at risk if you

- are immobile, or bed-bound
- are dehydrated
- have circulatory problems
- are overweight
- have other illness at the same time
- have varicose veins
- are over 60
- have a history of thrombosis, or a close relative with it.

## How can the risk be reduced?

The first line of defence is to try to keep the blood circulating at its normal rate. To do this;

- Try to keep on the move as much as possible. If you are not very mobile, then try to keep your leg/s raised and wiggle your feet around for five minutes every hour when you're sitting down.
- Drink enough to keep hydrated. In hot weather, you will need to drink more. Try not to wait until you are feeling thirsty; drink regularly instead.
- You are well hydrated if your urine is a light straw colour. If it is dark in colour, this is a sign of dehydration.

## Anticoagulants (ant clotting medicines)

If the ward doctor thinks you are at high risk of forming a thrombosis, they will prescribe you an anticoagulant to reduce the clotting ability of the blood.

At first, nursing staff will usually give this medicine to you as a daily injection.

If you do develop a DVT, then warfarin tablets are commonly used on a long term basis.

We may also ask you to wear Thrombo-Embolus Deterrent Stockings (TEDs). These should be worn for two years following a clot to help prevent post-thrombotic syndrome.

If you are on anticoagulants, your blood clotting times will be checked regularly to make sure you are on the right dose. If you notice signs of bleeding, such as red colour of your urine or bruises forming for no obvious reason, please let staff know.