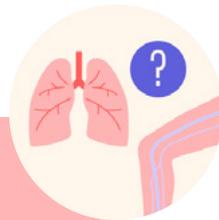


UNDERSTANDING

VENOUS THROMBOEMBOLISM



A PATIENT GUIDE TO VENOUS THROMBOEMBOLISM

INTRODUCTION

If you are reading this booklet, you may have been told by your doctor that you have, or are suspected of having, a condition called deep vein thrombosis (DVT) or pulmonary embolism (PE).

Learning that you have DVT or PE can be overwhelming. There is a lot of information to take in. This booklet is intended to help you and those you care for understand more about DVT and PE and how to help manage these conditions. This booklet aims to cover key information that we believe you will find helpful if you have DVT or PE and is intended to complement, but not replace, the information provided by your healthcare team.

Please remember that there is a team of knowledgeable healthcare professionals who are trained to help you with your condition and treatment, and to offer support. You should always speak to your healthcare team about what is concerning you and ask them any questions that you may have.

WHAT IS

VENOUS

THROMBOEMBOLISM?



After learning that you have DVT or PE you may be wondering what these conditions are. Both DVT and PE are caused when a blood clot blocks a key blood vessel.¹⁻⁵

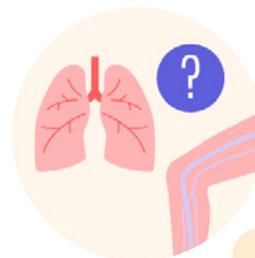
Sometimes, you may hear DVT or PE referred to as venous thromboembolism (VTE).¹

WHAT IS A DVT?

A DVT is a blood clot that may form in one of the deep veins of the body – usually in the calf or thigh of one leg.^{2,3,5}

WHAT IS A PE?

A PE may occur when part of a blood clot causing a DVT in the leg – or, rarely, in another part of the body – breaks away and travels through the bloodstream to the lungs. A PE is a serious medical condition that can potentially be life-threatening, so it needs to be treated as soon as possible.²⁻⁵

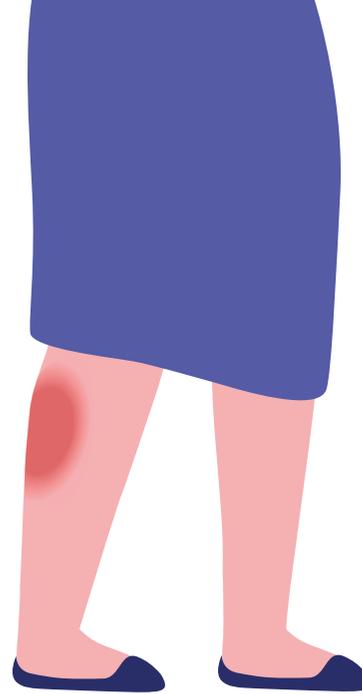


Although both DVT and PE are serious, and PE can be life-threatening, there are treatments available^{4,5}



HOW TO RECOGNISE THE

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF A DVT OR PE



If you think you might have a DVT or PE, you may want to know what the signs and symptoms of these two conditions are. In this section, you can find information about some of the most common signs and symptoms of a DVT or PE. Some people can, however, have a DVT or PE without any signs or symptoms.^{2,6}

If, for any reason, you are concerned that you might have any of these conditions, please get in touch with your doctor. You should also ask your doctor about DVT and PE.

If you are having chest pain or breathing difficulties, please contact your doctor immediately as it may be a medical emergency^{3,4,7}

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF A DVT:^{2,3,5}

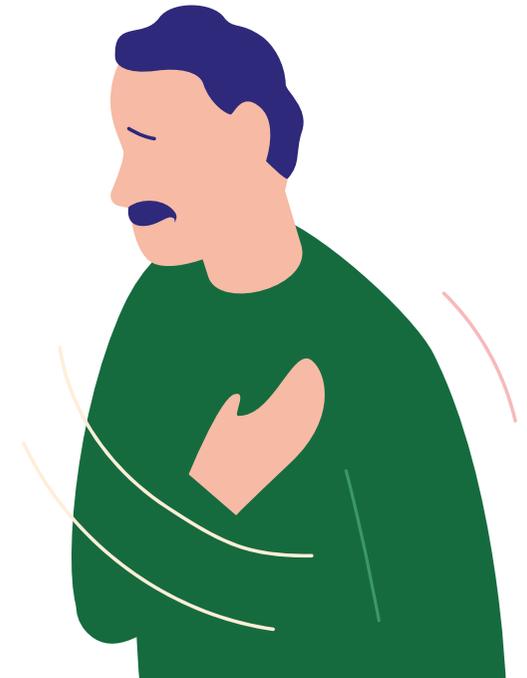
- Cramp-like pain or soreness, often in the calf
- Swelling, usually affecting one leg
- Red or discoloured skin that may feel warm to touch

If you think that you may have a DVT or PE, or you notice any of these signs or symptoms, you should consult a doctor to obtain a diagnosis and, if necessary, treatment.^{2,3,5}

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF A PE:^{2,4,5}

- Chest pain or discomfort that gets worse if you cough or take a deep breath
- Sudden shortness of breath
- Coughing up blood
- Rapid heartbeat
- Light-headedness, dizziness, or fainting
- Fever, sweating and / or clammy skin

You may have symptoms of a DVT too, as a PE usually occurs when a blood clot causing a DVT travels to the lungs.⁴



WHAT ARE SOME OF THE

CAUSES OF

DVT AND PE?



A change in makeup of blood, change in blood vessel wall and reduced blood flow could potentially cause a blood clot – for example, if you get injured, have surgery or you're taking medications that increase the clotting ability of the blood.^{2,6}

There are also other things, known as risk factors, that make blood clots more likely to develop. Having one or more of these risk factors does not mean that you will develop a DVT or PE – it just means that your chances are higher than for someone who does not have these risk factors.²

SOME FACTORS THAT MAY INCREASE YOUR RISK INCLUDE:^{2,3,6}



BEING CONFINED TO BED



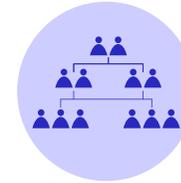
CERTAIN HEALTH CONDITIONS
(e.g. heart failure, cancer, kidney disease and inflammatory bowel disease)



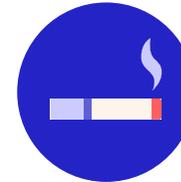
BEING PREGNANT OR HAVING RECENTLY GIVEN BIRTH



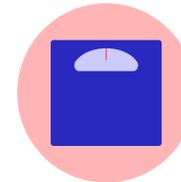
CERTAIN MEDICATIONS
(e.g. contraceptive pills, hormone replacement therapy (HRT), and some cancer treatments)



BLOOD CLOT HISTORY
(e.g. having had one before or a family member who had it)



SMOKING



BEING OVERWEIGHT



BEING OVER 60 YEARS OLD

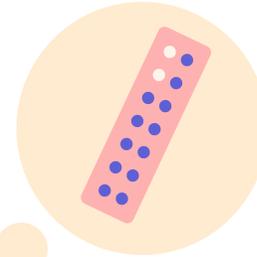
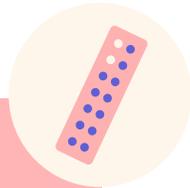
HOW CAN A

DVT OR PE BE TREATED?

If you have a DVT or PE, your doctor may prescribe you a type of medication called an anticoagulant (or blood thinner). Anticoagulants help to stop a blood clot from growing and reduce the risk of further clots forming.^{4,5,7}

Some patients may require a clot buster or dissolver (also known as thrombolytics) to try and break up the blood clot.⁷

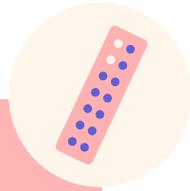
There are several different types of anticoagulant. Some are taken orally, others as injections. They all help to stop a blood clot from growing and make it harder for new blood clots to form by interrupting the body's natural mechanism for clotting blood.^{5,7,8}



**IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS ABOUT ANTICOAGULANTS
THEIR SIDE EFFECTS OR BLEEDING, PLEASE SPEAK TO YOUR DOCTOR**

HOW CAN A

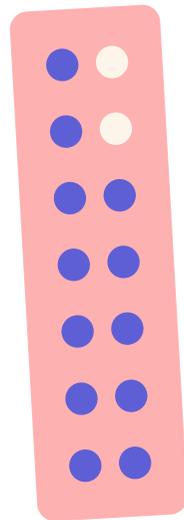
DVT OR PE BE TREATED?



TYPES OF ANTICOAGULANTS*

DIRECT ORAL ANTICOAGULANTS^{8,9}

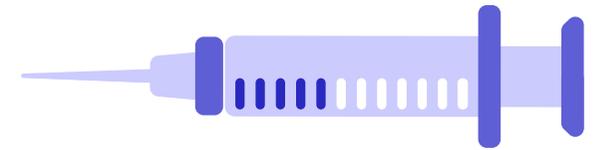
- Taken as tablets or capsules
- There are four different direct oral anticoagulants
- For some of these medicines, initial treatment with heparin injections is required
- Some may need to be taken with food or at certain times of the day
- There are usually few, or no, dietary restrictions with these types of anticoagulants – but please check with your healthcare team first



* If anticoagulants don't work, or are not suitable for you, you may be given a clot buster or dissolver (known as thrombolytics) to try and break up the blood clot. These medicines aren't used as often as anticoagulants.⁷

HEPARIN INJECTIONS^{7,10,11}

- Injected under the skin (subcutaneously) or directly into the vein, usually in an arm (intra-venous or IV injection)
- Some patients will switch from injections to oral anticoagulation for continued treatment



WARFARIN^{7-9,12,13}

- Taken as a tablet or liquid
- Levels of warfarin in your blood need to be closely monitored by your doctor through regular blood tests to help make sure you are on the right dose
- Heparin injections are usually required until the amount of warfarin in your blood reaches the right level
- Some foods can affect the way warfarin works and should be avoided – always ask your healthcare team for advice



ANTICOAGULANTS HAVE SIDE EFFECTS^{5,7,8,14}

You may bruise or bleed more easily than usual – talk to your doctor about the risks, benefits, and warning signs of anticoagulants

Always tell your healthcare team (e.g. your doctor, nurse, pharmacist, or dentist) that you are on an anticoagulant, especially before taking other medicines or undergoing any medical procedure

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS ABOUT ANTICOAGULANTS OR BLEEDING, PLEASE SPEAK TO YOUR DOCTOR

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE THINGS
TO CONSIDER IF YOU HAVE AN

ANTICOAGULANT- RELATED BLEED?



Anticoagulants are important to treat your DVT or PE. However, they can cause you to bruise or bleed more easily.^{8,12,14} This may be worrying, so understanding the precautions to take may be helpful.

SOME SUGGESTIONS OF PRECAUTIONS YOU CAN TAKE¹²

IN THE KITCHEN

- Take extra care – use a finger guard when preparing food

IN THE GARDEN

- Wear gloves when gardening or doing DIY

IN THE BATHROOM

- Use an anti-slip bath or shower mat
- Use a softer toothbrush to protect gums

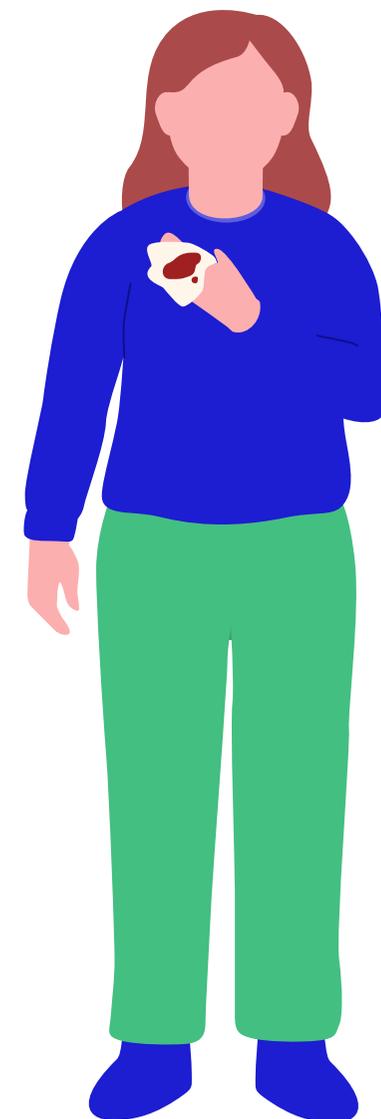
ALWAYS

- Tell anyone giving you medical treatment (e.g. your doctor, dentist, nurse, or pharmacist) that you are taking an anticoagulant¹²

Seek immediate medical help if you suffer major trauma or a blow to the head, or if you are unable to stop bleeding or experience symptoms, such as:^{8,14-17}

- coughing up blood
- bright pink red or dark brown blood in your urine
- bright red or dark brown vomit, which looks like coffee grounds
- bloody or black tarry stools
- intense bruising
- nosebleeds lasting longer than 10 minutes and that you can't control on your own
- bleeding gums
- heavier than normal menstrual periods (if you are a woman)

Some patients experience nausea, diarrhoea and / or heartburn. If these symptoms persist, contact your doctor.¹⁴



**IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS ABOUT ANTICOAGULANTS
OR BLEEDING, PLEASE SPEAK TO YOUR DOCTOR**

Visit www.LivingwithVTE.com.hk to learn more

HOW TO HELP PREVENT

ANOTHER DVT OR PE FOLLOWING TREATMENT



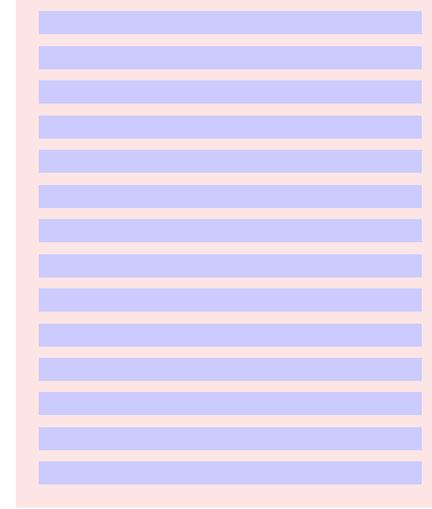
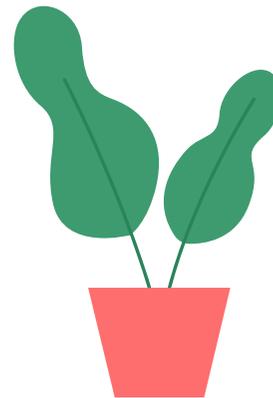
If you have had a DVT or PE and are receiving an anticoagulant for it, you might be at risk of having another DVT or PE, especially if you stop taking your medication.¹⁸ Your doctor will assess this risk and decide if you should continue treatment and for how long.

Having a DVT or PE may be worrying, but there are several things you can do to reduce the chance of it happening again.^{2,3,5,19}

TIPS TO HELP PREVENT ANOTHER DVT OR PE

TAKE YOUR MEDICATION^{5,7,20}

- If your doctor has given you medication to help prevent another DVT or PE, you need to take it as directed until you are told it is the right time to stop



**CONTACT YOUR HEALTHCARE TEAM FOR GUIDANCE
AND HELP WITH ANY CONCERNS YOU MAY HAVE**

HOW TO HELP PREVENT

ANOTHER DVT OR PE FOLLOWING TREATMENT



TIPS TO HELP PREVENT ANOTHER DVT OR PE

KEEP MOVING^{2,3,5,19,21}

- Avoid sitting for long periods – have a walk around every couple of hours, if you can
- If you can't move about – try to keep your legs moving while sitting or lying down
- Keep your legs raised – put them on a pillow when you are in bed or on cushions when you are sitting down
- On a flight or at your desk, raise your toes and heels alternately, keeping the rest of your foot flat, to boost the circulation
- Ask your doctor about wearing compression stockings

STAY HEALTHY^{2,3,19,21}

- Eat a healthy, balanced diet
- Think about losing weight if you are overweight – try to cut down the amount of sugar and fat you eat*
- Drink plenty of water and fluids
- Stop smoking and avoid drinking excessive amounts of alcohol as it can cause dehydration*

* Speak to your doctor or healthcare team for advice and guidance on this.³

EXERCISE REGULARLY^{2,3,5,19,21}

If you can, try and do some exercise every day – like a walk outside

The amount and type of exercise right for you will depend on your age and general health*

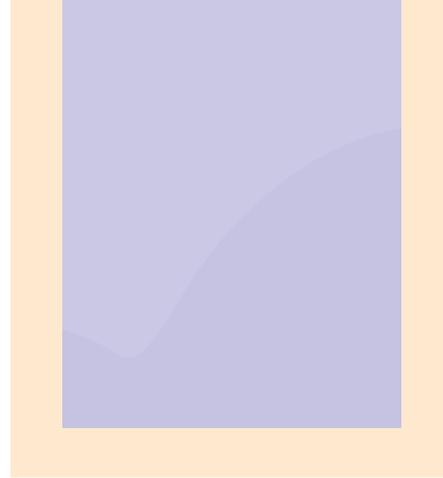


**CONTACT YOUR HEALTHCARE TEAM FOR GUIDANCE
AND HELP WITH ANY CONCERNS YOU MAY HAVE**

Visit www.LivingwithVTE.com.hk to learn more **10**

CONTACTING

YOUR DOCTOR

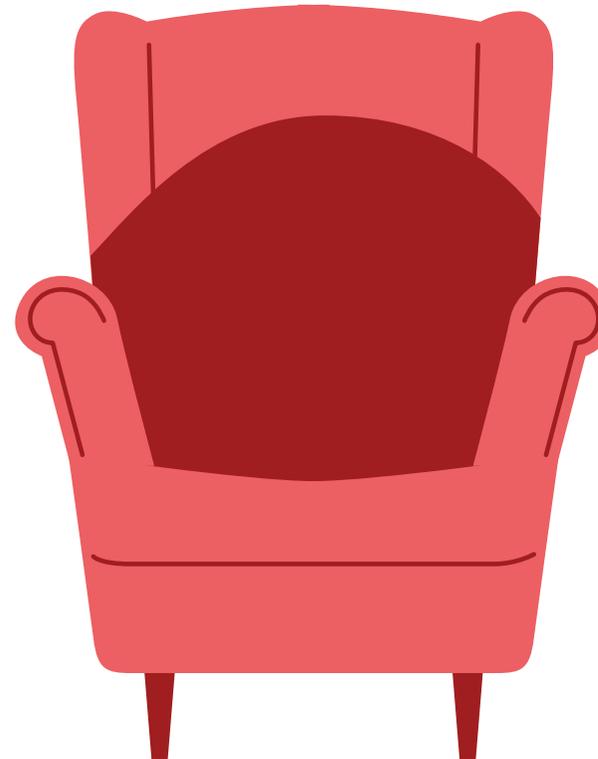
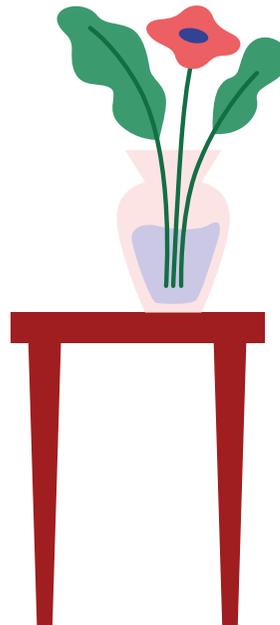


If you are worried about having another DVT or PE, remember that you are not alone – your doctor or healthcare team can discuss your questions and concerns with you, and offer reassurance and support, as well as practical help and advice.

It is important to attend all the appointments with your doctor, nurse, or other healthcare professional, and reschedule any appointments you can't attend.

Remember to contact your healthcare team if you are not sure what to do, have missed more than one dose of your medication, or if you have any other concerns.

Your healthcare team is there to support you.



REMEMBER YOU ARE NOT ALONE – CONTACT YOUR DOCTOR OR HEALTHCARE TEAM TODAY

WHAT TO CONSIDER FOR AN APPOINTMENT



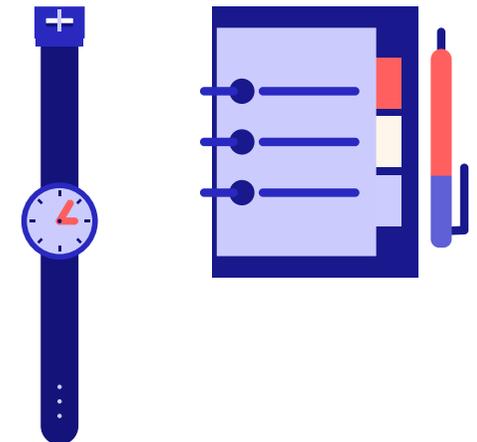
SOME SIMPLE TIPS

BEFORE YOUR APPOINTMENT

1. Think about what you want to get out of your appointment. This will help you to have more productive conversations, and ask specific questions about your condition or care
2. Take time to prepare and write down key points you want to discuss with your doctor or nurse
3. Some people find it helpful to talk through what they plan to discuss with family, friends, and carers
4. If your appointment is remote, rather than face to face and you are using a video call tool rather than the phone, try to familiarise yourself with it beforehand. You could try it with a friend or family member and make sure everything is working so that your appointment runs smoothly. If you require assistance to set up these tools, ask family, friends, or carers to help.

DURING YOUR APPOINTMENT

1. **Take your time** – try not to feel rushed. Stay relaxed so you remember the key points you wanted to discuss. Referring to your notes should help with this
2. **Be honest** – do not wait to be asked about a symptom or a concern. Tell the doctor or nurse what is on your mind. Give as much information as you can by referring to your list if you have prepared one
3. **Be open** – tell your doctor or nurse about how you are feeling and your overall wellbeing. Try to be specific about what is affecting you
4. **Write things down** – particularly if you do not have time to discuss everything you wanted to raise. If you have someone with you, ask them to write notes for you
5. **Ask questions** – do not be afraid to ask questions if there is anything you do not understand. It is important to be completely clear about your treatment
6. **Agree on next steps** – discuss and set up a plan of action with your doctor
7. **Understand when you will need to see your doctor next** – find out when your next appointment will be (whether in-person or remote), and what you need to do before then
8. **Keep a record** – make sure that you obtain a copy of any relevant documents during your discussion, as you may need to refer to them later



**IT IS IMPORTANT YOU DO NOT CANCEL OR
POSTPONE YOUR REGULAR CHECK-UPS**

WHAT TO CONSIDER FOR AN APPOINTMENT



AFTER YOUR APPOINTMENT

Hopefully, you will have left your last appointment with a plan of action. Here are some suggestions to help you reflect and remember the key points you discussed and agreed with your doctor

- 1. Reflecting on your appointment**
– if you took notes during your appointment, it is worth re-reading them now to check if there is anything missing and / or if they make sense. Did you get answers to all your questions?
- 2. Updating your family, friends, or carer**
– you might find it useful to tell your family, friends, or carer about your appointment. This will ensure that they are able to support you with your agreed next steps

- 3. Follow up appointments** – while it is still fresh in your mind, it might help to think about what went well and what you would like to do differently at future appointments. What questions would you have liked to ask? Make sure you make a note of these questions so that you have an opportunity to ask them at your next appointment



**IT IS IMPORTANT YOU DO NOT CANCEL OR
POSTPONE YOUR REGULAR CHECK-UPS**

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If you are prescribed an anticoagulant, it is important that you take it regularly and at the prescribed dose to reduce your risk of another DVT or PE. If your personal circumstances or environment make this challenging, make sure you speak to your doctor in order to make a plan to ensure that you take your medication as prescribed.



Learn more about
Atrial Fibrillation at www.LivingwithAF.com.hk
Venous Thromboembolism at www.LivingwithVTE.com.hk



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