

Are You at Risk of Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT) in Hospital?



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We often hear about the risks of DVT while on long distance trips. The risk is not confined to air travel however – DVT is much more likely to occur in patients who are admitted to hospital. This is because hospitalised patients often have several risk factors, such as acute medical illness, surgery and immobilisation.

What is DVT?

DVT is a common medical condition that occurs when a thrombus (blood clot) forms in a deep vein, usually in the leg or pelvis, causing either partially or completely blocked circulation.

How serious is DVT?

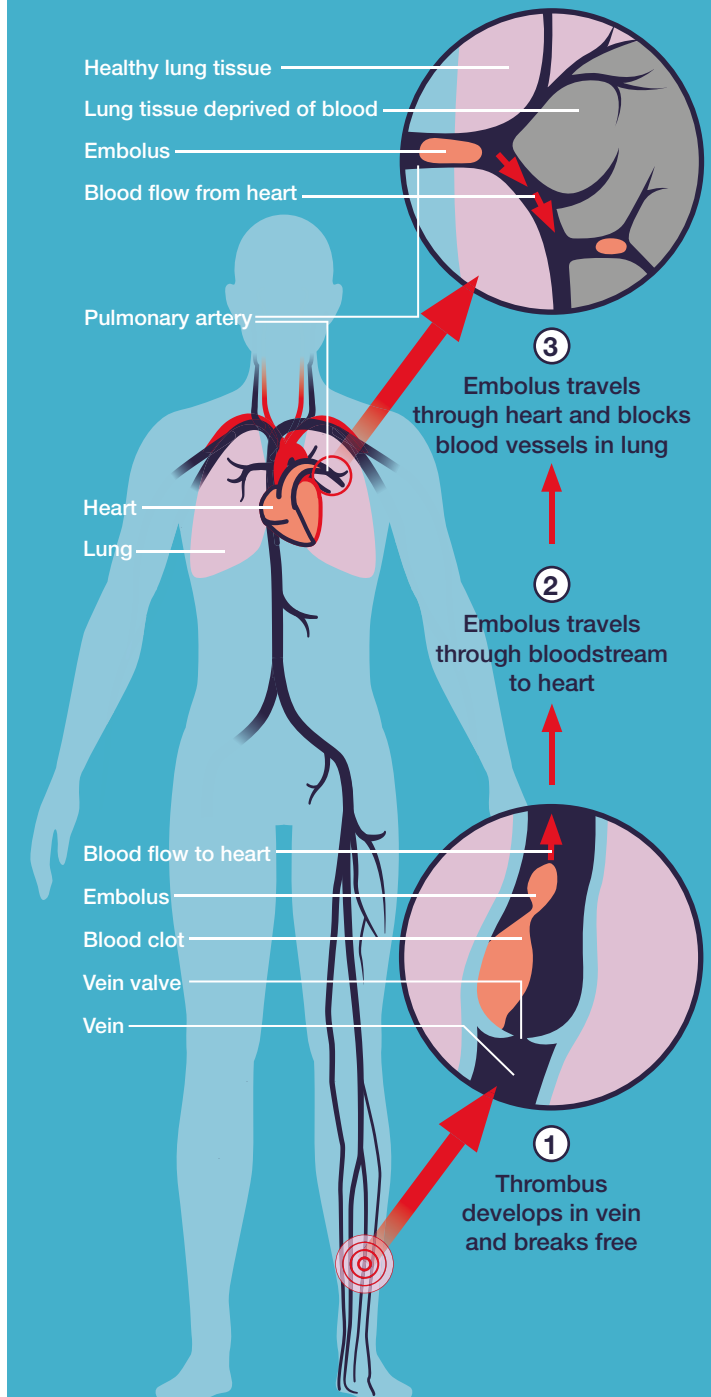
DVT may cause lifelong disability with painful, swollen legs, varicose veins and ulcers.

If part of the blood clot in the leg breaks off and travels to the lungs (embolus), it will cause a pulmonary embolism (PE). PE may result in breathing difficulties, which could prove to be fatal.

DVT and PE are known under the collective term of venous thromboembolism (VTE).

While heart attack and stroke are well recognised as leading causes of death, VTE is a major but underappreciated contributor to the global burden of cardiovascular disease.

Role of DVT in triggering PE



How common is it among patients admitted to hospital?

- Approximately 55% of all VTE cases are hospital-associated, meaning that blood clots occur during admission and up to 90 days after discharge
- VTE is one of the most common causes of avoidable hospital deaths
- Every year, an estimated 25,000 people in the UK would die from a thrombosis contracted in hospital if no preventative measures were taken by the hospital
- VTE causes more than five times the estimated number of deaths each year than from hospital acquired infection
- One third of surgical patients can develop DVT if no preventative measures are given
- 50 to 75% of all deaths from VTE in hospitals occur in medical (i.e. non-surgical) patients, since there are more medical than surgical patients

How do I find out if I am at risk of DVT in hospital?

There are several factors that may increase the chances of developing DVT in hospital – if a number of these apply to you, you may be considered to be high risk:

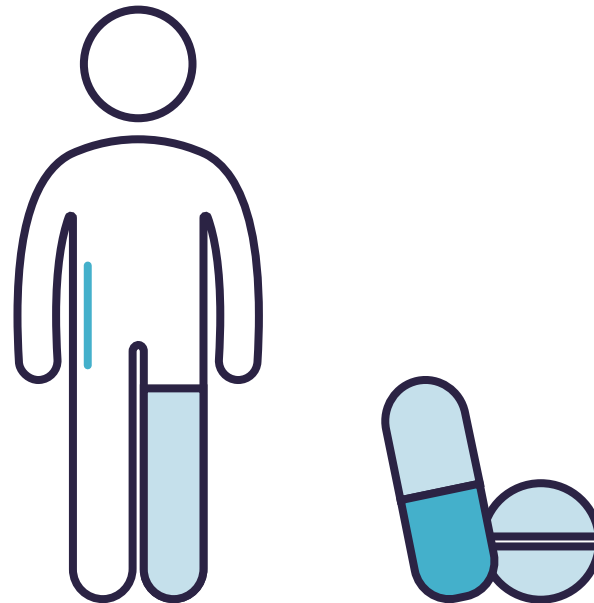
- It is well accepted that patients over 40 years of age have a significantly increased risk of VTE compared with younger patients, and the risk doubles with each subsequent decade
- Acute medical illness including heart failure, chronic respiratory diseases, major infections or cancer
- Major surgery including hip or knee replacements
- Immobility (especially relevant to hospital patients who are often confined to bed)
- Previous history of VTE, or with a strong family history
- Obesity (BMI > 30 kg/m²)

If I am admitted to hospital, what can be done to minimise my risk of DVT?

Be proactive upon hospital admission; ask your doctor for a VTE risk assessment, and ask if you should be given preventative treatment such as blood thinning drugs and/or compression stockings.

In the weeks prior to admission, what can I do to reduce my risk of developing DVT in hospital?

- Eat a balanced diet
- Keep a healthy weight
- Keep hydrated by drinking plenty of water
- Stay mobile and exercise regularly



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