



Oxford University Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Travelling and thrombosis risk

Information for patients



If you are on any continuous long distance journey lasting more than 4-6 hours, there is a small risk of developing a thrombosis.

A DVT (deep vein thrombosis) is a blood clot (thrombus) which blocks the blood flow in one or more of the veins in your leg.

A PE (pulmonary embolism) is a blood clot which blocks the blood flow in one or more of the vessels in your lungs.

The name for DVT, PE, or any other type of blood clot, is venous thromboembolism (VTE).

The risk of developing a DVT or PE increases as you get older. Other factors that may mean you are at increased risk are:

- previous DVT or PE
- pregnancy/postpartum (after childbirth)
- cancer
- thrombophilia disorders
- recent major surgery
- hormone therapy (contraceptive pill/hormone replacement therapy – HRT)
- being significantly overweight (obese)
- family history of VTE in a close relative
- immobility.

There is also an increased risk from continuous long distance travel in cramped positions, which often happens with air travel.

If you are taking warfarin at the time of your journey you should be well protected against developing a DVT, as long as your INR (which measures how long your blood takes to clot when taking warfarin) is at the right level.

More information about the INR can be found in the yellow leaflet 'Important information for patients on anticoagulation with vitamin K antagonists'. You can get this leaflet from the DVT Clinic or Anticoagulation Service if you are taking warfarin.

If you are taking an alternative anticoagulant drug, such as apixaban, dabigatran, edoxaban or rivaroxaban at the time of your journey, you should also be well protected, as long as you continue to take your tablets regularly, as prescribed.

How can I reduce the risk of developing a DVT?

- Do not sit for long periods and avoid crossing your legs. Make frequent changes of position, such as taking a walk.
- Do not take sleeping tablets or drink excessive alcohol, as this may also mean you remain in one position for a long period of time.
- Regularly bend and rotate your ankles. This will make your calf muscles contract, which will help your circulation. Deep breathing exercises will also help with circulation.
- Wear flight socks. These can be bought from a chemist or at the airport. Make sure the socks are the right size and fit properly (follow the manufacturer's instructions).

Aspirin has not been proven to be effective in reducing the risk of developing a clot while travelling.

Additional information if you have been diagnosed with a DVT (now or in the past)

If you have recently been diagnosed with a DVT in the past and are concerned about travelling, you should discuss this with your GP.

If you have recently been diagnosed with a DVT or PE, you should not travel by air within two weeks of diagnosis.

What symptoms should I look out for?

If you experience any of the following symptoms, please seek urgent medical attention as soon as possible:

- pain, swelling or redness in your legs, especially in your calves
- chest pain
- shortness of breath.

Where can I find more information?

For more information you can contact your GP. If you are taking an anticoagulant (like warfarin) you can contact your Anticoagulation Service for advice.

If you have a specific requirement, need an interpreter, a document in Easy Read, another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01865 221 473** or email **PALS@ouh.nhs.uk**

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