



You came to the emergency department with a swollen or painful leg or arm. Tests showed a blood clot in a deep vein, called a deep vein thrombosis (DVT). You have started treatment and can go home. This sheet explains your treatment and the warning signs.

What is it?

A DVT is a blood clot in a deep vein, usually in the leg. It can cause pain, swelling, warmth and redness. The main danger is that part of the clot breaks off and travels to the lungs. This is called a pulmonary embolism and can be serious. Blood-thinning medicine stops the clot growing and lets your body slowly break it down.

Looking after yourself at home

- Keep walking and moving as normal. Rest with your leg raised when you sit down, as this can ease swelling.
- Drink enough water and avoid sitting still for long periods. On long journeys, get up and walk every hour or two.
- Tell every doctor, dentist and pharmacist that you are taking a blood thinner.
- Blood thinners make you bleed more easily. Take care with sharp objects and avoid activities with a high risk of injury.
- Do not smoke. If you take the contraceptive pill or hormone therapy, ask your doctor whether you should keep taking it.

Medicines

- Take your blood thinner exactly as prescribed, at the same time each day. Do not stop or miss doses unless your doctor tells you.
- Treatment usually lasts at least 3 months. Your doctor will decide how long you need it.
- Avoid ibuprofen, aspirin and similar pain killers unless your doctor says they are safe. Paracetamol is usually fine; follow the packet or your doctor's instructions.
- Check with a pharmacist before taking any new medicine, herbal remedy or supplement.

Follow-up

- See your family doctor or health centre within one week to review your treatment.
- Go to any clinic or blood test appointments that were booked for you.

Come back to the emergency department or call an ambulance straight away if:

- Sudden shortness of breath or fast breathing
- Chest pain, especially when you breathe in
- Coughing up blood, or fainting
- Bleeding that will not stop, vomiting blood, or black or bloody stools
- A severe headache, or sudden weakness, numbness or trouble speaking
- Your leg becomes much more swollen, cold, pale or very painful



Scan to read this sheet on your phone

This leaflet is general information to support the advice your doctor or nurse gave you today. It does not replace their advice. If you are worried, seek medical help.
EM Orbit · Emergency medicine, in one orbit · dvt-en