

## **Signs and symptoms of a blood clot**

Signs and symptoms may include:

- increased pain and swelling in your leg
- chest pain which may worsen when you take a breath
- shortness of breath
- coughing up blood.

You should seek medical advice if you experience any of these symptoms.

## **Medication**

Your doctor or nurse has decided you would benefit from daily medication to reduce your risk of developing a blood clot.

There is currently insufficient evidence to support the use of oral (tablet) medication, but there is evidence to support the use of daily injection (Enoxaparin) known as low molecular weight heparin (LMWH). You or a family member or carer will be taught how to administer this.

You will also be provided with a written leaflet demonstrating how the medication should be given and a special box in which to dispose of the used needles. In the majority of patients, this medication will continue for several weeks. You will receive an initial 28 day supply of Enoxaparin from the ward. If you require further doses we will supply them for you.

Make sure you tell your healthcare team what other medications you are taking, including any that you buy over the counter, including herbal or other remedies.

## **What to look for**

If you following the advice given by your medical team, it is unlikely you will experience any problems. However, you should contact your GP or go to the Accident and Emergency Department if you develop any of the following:

- chest pains or shortness of breath
- an injury, particularly to your head or joints
- if you cut yourself and bleeding does not stop after five minutes of continuous pressure
- heavy bleeding from your nose or gums
- unexpected bruises
- vomiting blood or something that looks like coffee granules
- red urine or black stools.

It is common to develop small bruises at the injection site. However, large or very tender areas should be discussed with your GP or hospital doctor or nurse.

## **Further information**

If you have any questions or would like any further information on preventing blood clots, please ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.

## **Your NHS number**

When you attend hospital you will be asked for your NHS number and other information such as your address. Please be patient with this procedure. It is to ensure our records are kept up to date and to protect your safety. However, if you do not know your NHS number, please do not worry – you will still receive care!

## **Concerns or complaints**

If you have any concerns or worries about your care, please contact the department responsible. However, if you are unable to resolve your concerns or wish to make a formal complaint, please contact the Integrated PALS (Patient Advice and Liaison Service), Complaints and Litigation Service on 01206 745926 or ask any member of staff for a leaflet, which will describe how you may make a complaint.

## **Your views**

If you or a family member has recently been in either Colchester General Hospital or Essex County Hospital for any reason, you can tell us about your experience by visiting the [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk) website and clicking on the "Comments" section, or you can write to the address on the front of this leaflet or alternatively, email your comments to [info@colchesterhospital.nhs.uk](mailto:info@colchesterhospital.nhs.uk)

## **Introduction**

This leaflet outlines important information you or your carer should know about preventing blood clots after your operation. Approximately 5% of patients who remain immobile after a bowel operation experience a blood clot.

## **What is a blood clot?**

Blood needs to clot to stop the bleeding from an injury. At times this process may lead to unwanted clotting. Clots may form in the leg, known as a deep vein thrombosis (DVT), or travel to the lung, known as a pulmonary embolism (PE). Left untreated, blood clots in the legs may cause long term problems including swelling, aching, and skin changes such as ulceration. Clots on the lung may occasionally be fatal.

## **Risks of developing a blood clot**

After major abdominal surgery you are at an increased risk of a blood clot and the following are risk factors:

- your age is greater than 50 years
- not being as mobile
- you are overweight
- you are a smoker
- you are pregnant or have given birth within the previous six weeks
- you have cancer
- you take hormone replacement therapy or the oral contraceptive pill
- you are not very mobile
- you or a close relative have had a blood clot before
- you have any serious medical condition such as serious heart, lung or kidney disease.

This is not an exclusive list. You should ask your doctor or nurse if you have questions about your personal risk factors.



## Preventing blood clots after colorectal surgery

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Please ask if this  
leaflet is required in  
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Leaflet number	1513n1
Created	August 2014
Reviewed	August 2016
Next review	August 2018

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