



# Surgery and venous thromboembolism (VTE)

Before you are admitted to hospital for surgery, it is important to be aware of the risk of developing a condition called thrombosis, which may be increased during your hospital stay for various reasons. This leaflet will explain how the risk of developing a condition called venous thromboembolism (VTE) can be reduced and is a helpful guide to use before, during and after your stay in hospital. Detailed information and explanations will be given to you in person by our staff so please don't hesitate to ask if you have any questions or need further information.

## **What is thrombosis?**

When we cut ourselves, we bleed. To stop us from bleeding too much the body triggers a protective blood clotting mechanism and a scab forms on our skin. Sometimes a clot can occur inside a blood vessel in the body rather than on the skin. When this happens, it can slow down the flow of blood in that part of the body. This condition can cause pain, discomfort and lead to long term problems in the limbs and lungs. In some cases, it may even be fatal.

## **What is venous thromboembolism (VTE)?**

Venous thromboembolism can present itself as either deep vein thrombosis (DVT), or a pulmonary embolism (PE). In general, eye operations pose a very low risk of DVT and PE but as there are many risks for developing a VTE, nearly everyone coming into hospital for surgery is considered to be at increased risk.

## **Deep vein thrombosis (DVT):**

This is when the clots form inside the veins of the leg, blocking blood flow and making the leg swollen and painful. A pulmonary embolism (PE) is a potentially serious condition, occurring when these clots break off and become lodged in one of the arteries of the lung. It can cause pain, breathlessness and lack of oxygen in the blood.

## **Who is at particular risk of developing VTE?**

Those who are immobile (cannot move) are at higher risk but many other factors may increase a person's risk. Examples include you or your family having a previous history of DVT or PE. Other



either from your GP or local A&E. If you happen to have developed DVT or PE, anticoagulant medication is very effective at treating the problem.

**Possible symptoms to look out for include:**

- unexplained pain and swelling in your legs.
- chest pain when you take a breath.
- breathlessness.
- coughing up blood.

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**City Road, London EC1V 2PD**  
**Phone: 020 7253 3411**  
**[www.moorfields.nhs.uk](http://www.moorfields.nhs.uk)**

**Moorfields Direct telephone helpline**

Phone: 020 7566 2345

Monday-Friday, 8.30am-9pm

Saturday, 9am-5pm

Information and advice on eye conditions and treatments from experienced ophthalmic-trained nurses.

**Patient advice and liaison service (PALS)**

Phone: 020 7566 2324/ 020 7566 2325

Email: [moorfields.pals@nhs.net](mailto:moorfields.pals@nhs.net)

Moorfields' PALS team provides confidential advice and support to help you with any concerns you may have about the care we provide, guiding you

through the different services available at Moorfields. The PALS team can also advise you on how to make a complaint.

**Your right to treatment within 18 weeks**

Under the NHS constitution, all patients have the right to begin consultant-led treatment within 18 weeks of being referred by their GP. Moorfields is committed to fulfilling this right, but if you feel that we have failed to do so, please contact our patient advice and liaison service (PALS) who will be able to advise you further (see above). For more information about your rights under the NHS constitution, visit [www.nhs.uk/choiceinthenhs](http://www.nhs.uk/choiceinthenhs)

