

# GETTING ACTIVE AFTER A BLOOD CLOT

## Exercising after blood clots

After experiencing a blood clot, whether this is a pulmonary embolism (PE), a blood clot in the lungs, or a deep vein thrombosis (DVT), a blood clot most usually in the arms or legs, it is important and can be beneficial physically and emotionally, to exercise.

Below are a few suggestions and tips on how to set up a daily exercise programme. Please remember regular gentle exercise will be more beneficial than exhausting yourself once per week.

## Shortness of breath and physical activity

When you exert yourself physically you may experience some shortness of breath. Shortness of breath is a normal physiological response to an increase in physical activity. On a scale of breathlessness from 0-10 (10 being maximal breathlessness) you should aim to reach 3-5 for a moderate intensity work-out. Remember shortness of breath is subjective, i.e. only you know how short of breath you are. If you experience unrelenting shortness of breath that doesn't settle after the exertion and is getting worse, seek medical attention.

## Starting your walking programme

It is often best to choose a route that is close to home, relatively flat and has plenty of places to rest along the way. This could be at a local park or a modern shopping area where the ground is flat. Always remember to warm up by walking slowly for 3-5 minutes.

Set yourself a goal – that you feel you can manage. For some this might be a few minutes, while for others it may be longer.

The important thing is starting the programme and keeping to it. Please do not worry if your initial walk is only possible for a few minutes as it will increase over time!

It is important to do this regularly, ideally 5 – 7 days per week. You are building up your fitness and stamina with every walk.

## An example walking programme:

Set yourself a goal but be mindful that this may take several months to achieve. Don't be disheartened; you are building up your stamina with every walk.

After each walk, take a few minutes to cool down by walking slowly.

If you prefer a different type of exercise, consider those you enjoy and can easily access. Examples could be a local exercise class, swimming or cycling.

## Resistance training

Start with low weights/resistance and gradually increase as able. Listen to your body; exercising should not be painful. If you are unsure your doctor may be able to refer you to an exercise on prescription scheme or to a physiotherapist who will help design an individual training programme.

## Reducing the risk of further blood clots

There are many reasons why someone might develop a blood clot. Immobility and dehydration can increase risk. When you are sat for long periods of time, the blood flow slows and is more easily able to form clots. This is also the case when you are dehydrated – the blood can become 'stickier' and easier to clot.



Exercise and keeping mobile are important factors. If you have long periods of travel or are sat at a desk or in a chair for several hours without moving your risk of blood clots may increase.

Always try to move around at least every hour and make sure you drink plenty of water to keep hydrated. Keep a water bottle next to you and when you go out so you can take regular sips.

The following exercises can also help when you are sat for periods of time

**ANKLE PUMPS** – Sitting in a chair, move your feet up and down. Repeat every hour

**KNEE EXTENSIONS** - Straighten one knee, then slowly lower your foot to the floor, bending your knee. Repeat on your opposite leg. Repeat every hour

**SEATED MARCHING** - Sitting in a chair, slowly lift your knee up as much as possible in a marching movement, then slowly lower it. Alternate legs. Repeat every hour.



# KEEP MOBILE



# KEEP WELL HYDRATED

This information sheet has kindly been developed with support from:

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