

WHAT IS THROMBOSIS?

Thrombosis is a blood clot in a blood vessel (a vein or an artery). A **deep vein thrombosis (DVT)** is a blood clot that has formed in a deep vein, usually in the leg. If a **DVT** is left untreated, all or part of the clot can break off and travel in the bloodstream through the circulation to block all or part of the blood supply to the lungs. This is known as a '**pulmonary embolism**' (**PE**). A **PE** can cause long-lasting damage or be life-threatening. We call **DVT** and **PE** together venous thromboembolism (**VTE**)

Why do I need to know about blood clots?

Pregnancy is a risk factor for blood clots. During pregnancy, blood becomes more sticky and blood flow in the leg veins is more sluggish.

Pregnancy and clots

DVT is not common but blood clots can occur at any time during pregnancy, the highest risk being up to six weeks after giving birth.

Clots are serious conditions and need urgent medical attention.

In addition to pregnancy, there are other risk factors that can increase the risk of thrombosis, every woman should have their individual risk assessed at their booking appointment.

Some women identified as being at increased risk may be advised to take small doses of blood thinners to prevent DVT in the form of daily injections. The injections are safe for your baby.

Are you at increased risk?

Pregnancy is a risk factor for blood clots, however other things can also increase your risk:

- Being over 35 years of age
- Having already had three or more babies
- Having had a previous blood clot (**DVT**, **PE**, or both)
- A history of blood clots in your immediate family
- Having a condition that increases your risk, such as sticky blood (thrombophilia)
- Having badly inflamed varicose veins (they are painful, hard, and may be red)
- Long periods of immobility including bed rest
- Being overweight

Your DVT risk increases;

If during pregnancy you;

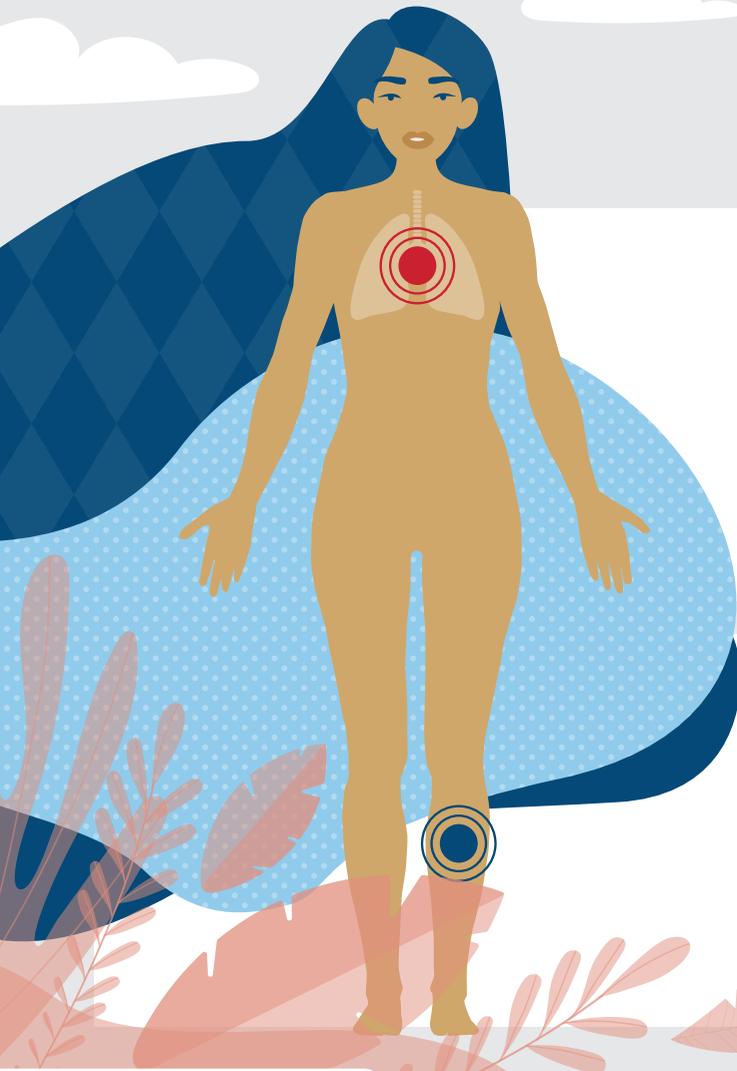
- Are admitted to hospital
- Are carrying more than one baby
- Become dehydrated or less mobile in pregnancy due to, for example, vomiting in early pregnancy or being in hospital
- Are immobile for long periods of time
- Have pre-eclampsia

After the birth of your baby if you;

- Had a caesarean section



THE SIGNS & SYMPTOMS



Pulmonary Embolism (PE):

A **PE** often causes sudden onset of chest pain, worse on breathing in, and breathlessness; or there may be tightness in the chest or chest or upper back pain. Occasionally a person may also cough up blood or experience light-headedness or blackouts.



**CALL 999
IMMEDIATELY**

Deep vein thrombosis (DVT)

The most common symptom of a **DVT** is an unexplained prolonged ache or pain in the leg. In pregnancy it is often accompanied with swelling in the leg.



**CALL YOUR GP,
MIDWIFE OR 111**



REDUCING YOUR RISK

You can reduce your risk of getting a **DVT** or **PE** by:



Staying as active as you can



Keeping hydrated by drinking normal amounts of fluids



Losing weight before becoming pregnant

If you are concerned you may have a blood clot, it is very important that you seek urgent medical attention to assess and confirm a diagnosis.

Tests to investigate your symptoms will need to be performed.

These tests are safe for you and your baby.

BLOOD CLOTS, PREGNANCY & YOU

CLOT-CHECK CARD

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Awareness • Research • Care

BE CLOT AWARE

- 1 Pain in the leg
- 2 Swelling in the leg
- 3 Sudden or gradual onset of breathlessness
- 4 Chest pain worse on breathing in

SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION **ASK**
"COULD I HAVE A BLOOD CLOT?"



For further information or advice, please contact us:

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