

## **Questions to ask your Healthcare Professional**

### **BEFORE OR AT FIRST PRESENTATION (SUSPECTING A CLOT)**

#### **1. About symptoms and urgency**

- Do my symptoms sound like they could be a blood clot (DVT or pulmonary embolism)?
- Is this an emergency and do I need to go to A&E or call 999?
- What warning signs should make me seek urgent help straight away (for example, chest pain, breathlessness, coughing blood, fainting)?

#### **2. About risk factors**

- What risk factors do I have for a clot (for example recent surgery, immobility, hormone treatment, pregnancy, cancer, previous clot, family history)?
- Do any of my current medicines, or conditions, increase my risk of a clot or bleeding?

#### **3. About the initial assessment**

- Will you be using a scoring system such as a clinical probability score (for example Wells score) to estimate my risk?
- What is/are my score(s) specifically?
- Based on that score, am I considered low, intermediate or high risk, and what does that mean for next steps?

#### **4. About where I will be seen**

- Is it appropriate for me to be managed as an outpatient, or do I need assessment/admission to hospital today?
- If I am being treated as an outpatient, which clinic or service will I be referred to, and when will I be seen?

## **DURING DIAGNOSTIC WORK-UP**

### **1. About tests being ordered**

- Which tests are you requesting to check for a clot (for example D-dimer blood test, ultrasound scan of the leg, CT pulmonary angiogram, V/Q scan)?
- Why are you choosing these tests for me specifically?
- How soon should these tests be done according to current NHS guidance (for example within the same day or within 24 hours)?
- What would constitute a “normal” set of results (how do I know if my results are normal or not)?

### **2. About interim (“while waiting”) treatment**

- Given my risk level, should I start anticoagulation (blood-thinning) treatment before the scan results are back, in line with national or local guidelines?
- If I start treatment before the scan, what happens if the scan later shows there is no clot?
- Are there any situations in my case where you would avoid starting treatment before confirming the diagnosis?

### **3. About alternatives and risks**

- Are there any reasons I cannot have the recommended scan (for example kidney problems, contrast dye allergy, pregnancy, mobility issues)?
- If the main test is not suitable, what is the alternative test and how accurate is it?

### **4. About practicalities and follow-up**

- How and when will I get my test results?
- Who do I contact and what should I do if I have not heard about my results by the time you expect?
- Should I restrict activity or travel while waiting for tests?

## WHEN A CLOT IS CONFIRMED

### 1. Understanding the diagnosis

- What type of clot do I have (for example deep vein thrombosis in the leg, pulmonary embolism in the lungs, superficial thrombophlebitis, other), and how extensive is it?
- Is this considered provoked (with a clear trigger, such as surgery or immobility) or unprovoked?
- How serious is my situation right now and what signs should prompt urgent review?

### 2. About treatment options

- What anticoagulant are you recommending (for example apixaban, rivaroxaban, warfarin, low molecular weight heparin).
- Why is this the best choice for me according to NICE / local NHS guidance?
- Are there other reasonable options, and what are the pros and cons of each for someone in my situation?
- Will I need injections, tablets, or both, and for how long initially?

### 3. About duration of treatment

- How long do you expect me to take anticoagulation (for example 3 months, 6 months, or longer-term) and what factors will influence that decision?
- When and how will my treatment duration be formally reviewed?
- By whom (for example at a 3-month review or thrombosis clinic) and can I have contact information?

### 4. About monitoring and safety

- Do I need regular blood tests to monitor this treatment (for example kidney function, liver function, clotting tests)?
- If so, how often?
- What are the main bleeding risks or side effects I should watch for?
- What should I do if they occur?
- Are there foods, over-the-counter medicines, or herbal supplements I should avoid with this treatment?

### 5. About underlying causes

- Do you think any further tests are needed to look for underlying causes, such as undiagnosed cancer or a clotting tendency (thrombophilia)?
- If so which tests and when?
- In my age group and situation, is extensive cancer screening recommended, or is a targeted approach more appropriate?

## ONGOING MANAGEMENT AND LIFESTYLE

### 1. Follow-up and who to contact

- Who is in charge of my VTE care now (for example GP, haematology or thrombosis clinic, respiratory or medical team)?
- When is my next review, and what will be checked at that appointment?
- If I have new symptoms, or side effects from treatment, who should I contact during working hours and out of hours?

### 2. Activity, work, and travel

- What level of physical activity is safe, and are there specific exercises or walking advice you recommend to reduce swelling and future risk?
- Is it safe for me to fly or go on long car/train journeys while I am on treatment, and are there extra precautions I should take?
- When can I return to work, and are there any adjustments I should ask my employer for?

### 3. Other medical care

- Do I need a medical alert card or any written information about my anticoagulant, and will you provide this?
- What do I need to tell dentists, pharmacists, and other clinicians about my clot and anticoagulant before procedures or new prescriptions?
- If I become pregnant, plan pregnancy, or need hormone therapy (HRT, contraceptive pill), how will this affect my clot risk and treatment plan, and who should I speak to?

### 4. Long-term risks and prevention

- What is my risk of having another clot after I stop treatment?
- How does that change if I continue treatment longer-term?
- Are compression stockings or other measures recommended in my case to reduce post-thrombotic syndrome (for leg DVT)?
- What can I do in everyday life to reduce my overall risk (for example weight management, staying active, managing other medical conditions)?

## **COMMUNICATION, INFORMATION AND SHARED DECISIONS**

### **1. Understanding and shared decisions**

- Can you explain my condition and treatment plan in simple terms, and can you check I have understood correctly?
- What are the benefits and risks of the treatment you recommend for me, and what would happen if I chose not to have it?
- Are there decisions we can revisit later (for example how long to treat, whether to investigate further), and when will we do that?

### **2. Written information and support**

- Can you give me written information or trusted NHS links about DVT/PE, anticoagulants, and living with a blood clot?
- Are there local thrombosis clinics, specialist nurses, or patient support groups I can contact if I have more questions?
- Who should my family or carers contact if they are worried about me or need advice?