

BLOOD CLOTS AND PREGNANCY



WHAT IS A BLOOD CLOT?

Blood normally flows through your body like water in a river. Sometimes, blood can become thick and sticky and turn into a lump. This lump is called a blood clot.

A small clot can be helpful. It stops you losing too much blood if you get a cut. But sometimes a clot forms inside a blood tube when it shouldn't. This can cause problems.

WHY DOES PREGNANCY MAKE CLOTS MORE LIKELY?

When you are pregnant, your body changes to keep your baby safe. Your blood gets thicker and clots more easily. This helps get your body ready for the birth.

This means pregnant women have a higher chance of getting a clot than other people.

HOW LIKELY IS THIS TO HAPPEN?

Getting a blood clot in pregnancy is not common. Most pregnant women never get one. But it is important to know about, because sometimes a clot can be very serious.

If a clot is not treated, it can make a person very poorly. In rare cases, it can even cause death.

This sounds scary, but please remember:

- It does not happen to most women
- Doctors and midwives are good at spotting the signs
- Getting help quickly makes a big difference
- That is why it is so important to know the signs and tell someone straight away



WHERE CAN CLOTS HAPPEN?

Clots most often happen in the leg. This is called a **DVT (deep vein thrombosis)**. Sometimes a clot can travel to the lungs. This is called a **PE (pulmonary embolism)**. This is more serious.

What are the signs of a clot in the leg?

Watch out for:

- Pain and/or swelling in one leg (usually just one, not both)
- The leg may feel warm to touch
- Sometimes the skin looks red or a different colour
- The leg may feel heavy or achy

What are the signs of a clot in the lungs?

Watch out for:

- Sudden trouble breathing
- Pain in your chest, especially when you breathe in
- A fast heartbeat
- Coughing, sometimes with blood
- Feeling dizzy or faint or passing out

What should I do if I notice these signs?

Get help straight away.

- Call your midwife, doctor, or maternity unit
- Or go to the nearest A&E (Emergency Department)
- Or call 999 if you feel very unwell

Do not wait to see if it gets better. It is always best to get checked.

**SEEK
MEDICAL
ATTENTION**

CAN CLOTS BE STOPPED?

Yes. Here are some things that can help:



Keep moving.
Walk around often,
especially on long trips



Keeping hydrated
by drinking plenty
of water



Tell your midwife
about your health



Some women may
need special medicine.
Your doctor will tell you
if you need this

WHAT IF MY RISK IS HIGH?

If your midwife or doctor thinks you have a high chance of getting a clot, they may give you a special medicine.

This medicine is called a blood thinner. It helps stop clots from forming.

The most common one used in pregnancy is called **LMWH (low molecular weight heparin)**. You might hear the names Clexane or Inhixa or Enoxaparin or Fragmin or Dalteparin or Innohep or Tinzaparin.

Here is how it works:

- It comes as a small injection (a tiny needle), not a tablet
- Your midwife or nurse will teach you how to give it to yourself
- It usually goes into the fatty part of your tummy or thigh
- You will give yourself a small dose, once a day
- Your doctor works out the right amount just for you, based on your weight and health

Blood thinners used in pregnancy are safe for your baby. They do not cross over to the baby.

You may need to keep having the injections for a while after your baby is born too. Your doctor will tell you how long.



WHO IS MORE AT RISK?

You may be more at risk if you:

- Are having twins or more
- Have had a clot before
- Are overweight
- Smoke
- Sit or lie still for a long time
- Have certain other health conditions

Your midwife will ask you questions to check your risk.

Remember

- Blood clots are more common in pregnancy, but most women do not get one
- Knowing the signs helps you stay safe
- If something feels wrong, always ask for help
- You will never be told off for asking. It is always okay to check



**IF YOU ARE WORRIED,
SPEAK TO YOUR
MIDWIFE OR DOCTOR.
THEY ARE THERE TO
HELP YOU.**

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