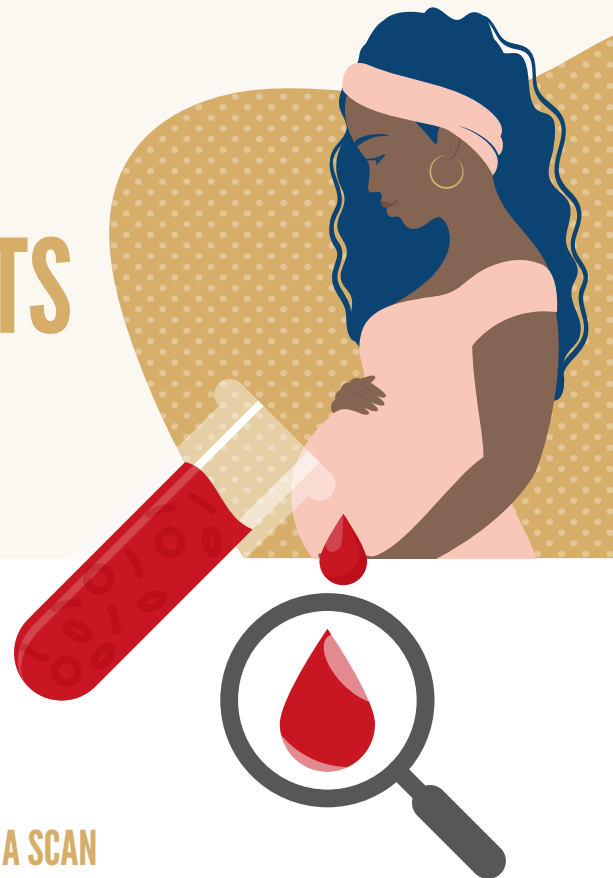


DIAGNOSING BLOOD CLOTS IN PREGNANCY:

How the Hospital Looks After You



WHY ARE YOU READING THIS?

Your doctor or midwife thinks you might have a blood clot or wants to check for one. This leaflet tells you what will happen next, in simple steps.

STEP 1

THE HOSPITAL ASKS YOU QUESTIONS

First, the hospital team will ask about how you feel.

They might ask:

- Where does it hurt?
- When did it start?
- Is one leg more swollen than the other?
- Is it hard to breathe?

This helps the team know what to check next.

STEP 2

THE HOSPITAL DOES A BLOOD TEST

The hospital will take a small sample of your blood. This is called a blood test. A nurse uses a small needle to take the blood from your arm. The blood test helps show if your body has signs of a clot.

A blood test on its own cannot show for sure if you have a clot. That is why the hospital also does a scan.

STEP 3

THE HOSPITAL DOES A SCAN

A scan is a picture of the inside of your body. It does not hurt. Scans are very important. A scan is the only way to know for sure if you have a clot. The type of scan depends on where the clot might be.

If the clot might be in your leg

The hospital uses an ultrasound scan. This is the same kind of scan used to look at your baby. A machine uses sound waves to make a picture of the blood flowing in your leg.

If the clot might be in your lungs

The hospital may use one of two special scans. Both are safe to have in pregnancy.

Ventilation and perfusion scan (also called a V/Q scan)

- This scan looks at two things: the air going into your lungs, and the blood flowing through your lungs
- You breathe in a very small amount of a safe substance that shows up on the scan. This checks the air part.
- * You are also given a small injection into a vein. This checks the blood flow part.
- * A special camera takes pictures of your lungs
- * The doctor compares the two pictures. If part of your lung is getting air but not enough blood, this can show a clot
- * This scan uses a very small, safe amount of radiation

CT pulmonary angiogram (also called a CTPA)

- This is a type of CT scan, which takes detailed pictures of your chest
- You will have a small injection of dye into a vein in your arm
- The dye travels to your lungs and shows up clearly on the scan
- This lets the doctor see if there is a clot blocking blood flow in your lungs
- The scan is quick, usually just a few minutes
- This scan also uses a small, safe amount of radiation

Is the radiation from these scans safe?

Both scans use a very small amount of radiation. This is much less than the amount known to cause harm. But it helps to know the difference between the two scans:

CTPA: This gives a little more radiation to the mother's breast tissue. Over a lifetime, this can very slightly raise the chance of breast cancer. The extra chance is small.

V/Q scan: This gives a little more radiation to the baby than a CTPA does. The extra chance of harm to the baby is also small.

To put this in perspective:

- The amount of radiation from either scan is far below the level known to harm a baby
- Doctors only use these scans when they are needed, to find a clot that could be dangerous if missed
- Not having a scan, when a clot is truly there, is far riskier than the small risk from the scan itself

The doctor will talk to you about which scan is best for you. They will think about your health, your chest x-ray, and these small differences in risk.

The doctor will decide which of these two scans is best for you. This depends on things like your chest x-ray, your health, and what is available at the hospital.

You may need more than one scan. Sometimes the first scan does not show enough, so the hospital checks again.

STEP 4 THE HOSPITAL GIVES YOU THE RESULTS

Once the blood test and scan results are ready, the team will explain what they show.

- If there is no clot, the hospital will tell you and explain why you felt unwell.
- If there is a clot, the hospital will start treatment straight away.

STEP 5 IF YOU HAVE A CLOT, THE HOSPITAL STARTS TREATMENT

If a clot is found, the hospital gives you medicine called a blood thinner.

This medicine stops the clot from getting bigger. It also helps stop new clots forming.

- It is usually given as a small injection, once a day
- A nurse or midwife will show you how to do it yourself
- It is safe for your baby
- The doctor decides the right amount for you

STEP 6 THE HOSPITAL KEEPS CHECKING ON YOU

While you have treatment, your Maternity team will:

- See you regularly to check how you are doing
- Make sure the medicine is working well
- Talk to you about your plan for the birth
- Explain if you need to keep having treatment after your baby is born

REMEMBER

- Blood tests and scans work together. Both are needed to be sure.
- A scan is needed to make a clear diagnosis. It is the best way to see a clot.
- If you have a clot, treatment works well and is safe for you and your baby.
- You can always ask questions. The hospital team is there to help.

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

Thrombosis UK (www.thrombosisuk.org)

Download our app today! Scan the QR code for more details.

