

CHECKING YOUR BLOOD CLOT RISK IN EARLY PREGNANCY

A simple guide for you and your family



WHY ARE YOU READING THIS?

When you find out you are pregnant, you will book with a midwife, who will see you at a “booking appointment” usually when you are about 10 weeks pregnant. Before that time a new check for blood clots has been introduced if you live in England. This is called a risk check. It helps to see if you have a higher chance of getting a blood clot.

This check is part of Element 1 of the Maternal Care Bundle. The Maternal Care Bundle is a set of NHS rules that help keep pregnant women safe. Element 1 is about blood clots.

This leaflet tells you what the check is, why it matters, and what happens next.

WHAT IS A BLOOD CLOT?

A blood clot is a lump that forms inside a blood vessel. It can block blood from moving around your body. This can make you very unwell. Doctors call this VTE, which is short for venous thromboembolism.

Being pregnant makes blood clots more likely. This is normal, but doctors want to catch any extra risk early, so they can help keep you and your baby safe.

WHEN WILL I BE ASKED?

You will be asked as soon as you tell any NHS doctor or nurse that you are pregnant. This could be at:

- your GP surgery
- a midwife appointment
- a hospital or emergency department
- an early pregnancy clinic
- an abortion service, if you go to one

You should not have to wait until your first big pregnancy appointment (called “booking”). The check should happen as soon as possible.

WHERE CAN I DO THE CHECK MYSELF?

The questions come from a tool made by a group of experts and is on the website of Thrombosis UK.

You can look at it, or fill it in yourself, on the website:

thrombosisuk.org/earlypregnancy

Your doctor or nurse will usually go through this with you at your appointment. But you do not need to wait — you can look at it yourself too.



WHAT WILL I BE ASKED?

You will fill in a short list of questions. It only takes a few minutes. The questions ask about things like:

- if you have had a blood clot before
- if you have been being very sick and cannot keep food or drink down
- your weight

These questions help your midwife or doctor work out your risk.



WHAT HAPPENS IF I AM AT HIGHER RISK?

If the check shows you have a higher risk of a blood clot, you will be offered a medicine to help prevent one. This medicine is called **LMWH** (low molecular weight heparin).

- It is given as a small injection, usually under the skin.
- It is safe to use in pregnancy.
- You should be able to start it within 3 days of your check.
- You will be given enough for about 4 weeks, then seen again to check how you are doing.

A nurse or doctor will show you how to do the injection, or arrange for someone to help you.



WILL I HAVE TO PAY FOR THE MEDICINE?

No. You should not have to pay. Your doctor or midwife can arrange a special certificate so your medicine is free.

WHAT IF I AM ALREADY ON MEDICINE FOR BLOOD CLOTS?

If you already take medicine to prevent blood clots, do not stop it. Contact your usual doctor or the team who look after you as soon as you find out you are pregnant. They will check your medicine is still right for you.

WHAT IF I DECIDE NOT TO CONTINUE THE PREGNANCY?

If you are thinking about having an abortion, you will still be asked the blood clot questions. If you are at higher risk, you may still be offered the medicine to keep you safe.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Blood clots are one of the most common serious problems that can happen in pregnancy. Finding out early who is at higher risk means doctors can act quickly and help stop a blood clot before it happens.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR MIDWIFE OR DOCTOR



- Am I at higher risk of a blood clot?
- Do I need medicine to help prevent one?
- How do I do the injection?
- Who do I contact if I feel unwell?



CALL 999 OR GO TO A&E STRAIGHT AWAY IF YOU HAVE:

- sudden pain, swelling or redness in one leg
- sudden chest pain
- sudden shortness of breath
- you cough up blood

TELL THEM YOU ARE PREGNANT.

This leaflet is based on NHS England's Maternal Care Bundle, Element 1: Venous thromboembolism. It is for information only. Always follow the advice of your own midwife or doctor.

Thrombosis UK (www.thrombosisuk.org)

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



 **Thrombosis UK**
Awareness • Research • Care

Reg Charity No: 1090540