

Risks of deep vein thrombosis (DVT) with lower limb immobilisation

Emergency and Urgent Services [Patient information](#)

When your leg is immobilised in a plaster cast, walking boot, or knee brace, lack of movement increases the risk of developing blood clots in the deep veins of the leg, called deep vein thrombosis (DVT).

A DVT itself is not life-threatening, however sometimes part of the blood clot can become dislodged and travel to your heart and lungs. This is called a pulmonary embolus (PE) and if a PE is very large, it can cause dizziness, collapse, or even sudden death.

The risk of developing a DVT while your leg is immobilised is small, but your personal risk depends on things like your age, weight, medical history, and family history of blood clots. If you are at a high risk of blood clots you may be offered medication to reduce the risk of blood clot formation.

How can I reduce my risk of developing a DVT?

- Stay as active as possible. If you are unable to walk, try to move your legs and feet as often as possible (unless advised otherwise).
- Take regular fluids to stop yourself becoming dehydrated.
- If you need to travel on a long journey, try to move your legs regularly. If travelling by car, have a break and walk around every hour or two.

What should I do if prescribed medication?

- Continue to take this medication until you can walk on your injured leg without the use of a cast or walking boot, or until you are advised otherwise by the orthopaedic team.
- If you are going to run out of the medication before your fracture clinic appointment, please contact the Virtual Fracture Clinic on **0300 0192802** for assistance.

What are the signs and symptoms of DVT/PE?

- New increased pain in the leg muscles that is getting worse or not settling with painkillers
- Unexplained swelling in the injured leg
- Warm or discoloured skin on your legs
- New shortness of breath/feeling breathless
- Pain in your chest, back, or ribs, especially if the pain is worse on breathing in
- Coughing up blood
- New unexplained light-headedness or collapsing episodes (with or without loss of consciousness)

If you experience any of these symptoms you should:

- **call 111 for advice on where to attend if the problem is in your leg**
- **return to the Emergency Department as soon as possible if the symptoms are related to your breathing or chest**
- **call 999 if you are acutely unwell.**

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