



York and Scarborough  
Teaching Hospitals  
NHS Foundation Trust

# What you need to know about Preventing Blood Clots (Venous Thromboembolism) While Receiving SACT

Information for patients, relatives and carers

① For more information, please contact:

Between 8am and 5pm, Monday to Friday:

**Cancer Services**

York Hospital: 01904 726516

Scarborough Hospital: 01723 342447

All other times call Haematology and Oncology Inpatient  
Unit (ward 31) on 01904 726031

# **Why have I been given this information?**

Having cancer and receiving cancer treatment can increase the risk of developing a blood clot. A blood clot in a vein is also called a venous thromboembolism (VTE).

You may be receiving systemic anti-cancer therapy (SACT). This is the name given to cancer treatments that work throughout the whole body, such as chemotherapy, immunotherapy, targeted treatments, or hormone therapy.

This leaflet explains the types of blood clots that may occur, what symptoms to watch for, when to seek medical advice, and what can be done to reduce the risk of a blood clot.

## **What is Venous Thromboembolism (VTE)?**

There are two types of VTE:

1. Deep Vein Thrombosis, or DVT, is a blood clot that forms in the deep veins that run through your body. The most common place for a blood clot to form is in the veins in one of legs (usually the calf or thigh), but they can also form in the arm.
2. Pulmonary Embolism, or PE, happens when a part or all of a blood clot becomes dislodged, passes through circulation, reaches lungs and blocks an artery there.

# Signs and symptoms of VTE

The most common symptoms of DVT include:

- pain or tenderness
- swelling in leg or arm
- redness and warmth of the affected area
- leg pain that worsens when walking or standing

The most common symptoms of PE include:

- sudden shortness of breath
- rapid breathing
- chest pain (can be sharp or stabbing, worse when breathing in, coughing or moving)
- fast heart rate, racing pulse or palpitations
- cough, sometimes with blood-stained sputum

If you develop any of these symptoms, seek medical advice immediately.

# Who is at risk of VTE?

Having an active cancer, especially in pancreas, stomach, lung, multiple myeloma, lymphoma, gynaecological, bladder, brain or kidneys can increase the risk of blood clots.

Some cancer treatments, such as cisplatin, tamoxifen, thalidomide, pomalidomide, lenalidomide, bevacizumab and sunitinib, may also increase this risk.

There are other additional risk factors that may increase the risk of developing a VTE:

- age of over 60 years old
- pregnancy or recent child delivery
- blood clots in medical history or in family history
- another medical condition requiring regular treatment
- being overweight
- reduced mobility
- smoking
- dehydration
- having a central line (PICC, Hickman, port-a-cath)
- taking a contraceptive pill or hormone replacement therapy (HRT)
- an operation, especially on stomach, hip or knee.

## **What can I do to reduce my risk of VTE?**

- Keep a healthy weight and eat a healthy balanced diet.
- Keep moving or walking; leg exercises are valuable.
- Drink plenty of fluid to keep hydrated.
- Stop smoking.
- Talk to your doctor or nurse if you take a contraceptive pill or hormone replacement tablets. Your doctor may ask you to stop taking them while having chemotherapy.
- If you have to make long journeys that are longer than three hours, try to walk around or do leg exercises during the journey. Wearing compression stockings may also be a suitable option.

You should always tell your doctor before you start your cancer treatment if you or a close relative have had a previous blood clot.

If you have any questions or concerns, please ask your doctor for advice.

## **How can my medical team help me reduce my risk of developing a VTE?**

Your doctor may advise you to start on some medications to help reduce your risk of developing a VTE. This is also known as prophylaxis. Some of the possible options include:

- Daily injections, such as enoxaparin.
- A type of tablet medication often referred to as a DOAC (direct acting oral anticoagulation). Examples may include apixaban, rivaroxaban and edoxaban.

Not all options are suitable for everybody. Tell your doctor, nurse or pharmacist about any other medications you may be taking to help them offer the most appropriate VTE prophylaxis to you.

## **Tell us what you think of this leaflet**

We hope that you found this leaflet helpful. If you would like to tell us what you think, please contact Simas Vaitkevicius, Haematology Pharmacist, [simas.vaitkevicius@nhs.net](mailto:simas.vaitkevicius@nhs.net).

## **Teaching, training and research**

Our Trust is committed to teaching, training and research to support the development of health and healthcare in our community. Healthcare students may observe consultations for this purpose. You can opt out if you do not want students to observe. We may also ask you if you would like to be involved in our research.

## **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)**

PALS offers impartial advice and assistance to patients, their relatives, friends and carers. We can listen to feedback (positive or negative), answer questions and help resolve any concerns about Trust services.

PALS can be contacted on 01904 726262, or email [yhs-tr.patientexperienceteam@nhs.net](mailto:yhs-tr.patientexperienceteam@nhs.net).

An answer phone is available out of hours.

# Leaflets in alternative languages or formats

If you would like this information in a different format, including braille or easy read, or translated into a different language, please speak to a member of staff in the ward or department providing your care.

Patient Information Leaflets can be accessed via the Trust's Patient Information Leaflet website:

[www.yorkhospitals.nhs.uk/your-visit/patient-information-leaflets/](http://www.yorkhospitals.nhs.uk/your-visit/patient-information-leaflets/)

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