

Treating a blood clot in your lungs (pulmonary embolism)

Respiratory Medicine

Information for Patients

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What is a pulmonary embolism?

It is a blocked blood vessel in your lungs. The clot usually forms in the leg (deep vein thrombosis) and travels to the lung, where it gets lodged.

Why did I get a PE?

It is difficult to say exactly why some people form more clots than others. There are some conditions which increase the likelihood of forming clots. There are some known risk factors listed below but we may not always find a reason.

Risk factors for PE:

- Recent hospital stay for surgery, especially for hips or knees,
- Getting older, reduced mobility,
- Obesity,
- Certain types of contraceptive pills and hormone replacement therapies (HRT) taken by mouth,
- Your family has a history of clots or you have had them before,
- Cancer,
- Pregnancy,
- Travelling for a long time (for example long flights),
- Blood clotting problems,

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or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

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To give feedback about this information sheet, contact uhl-tr.informationforpatientsmailbox@nhs.net

What are my treatment options?

The usual treatment option is blood thinners (anticoagulants) which prevents your blood from clotting easily.

The medicine comes in 2 forms:

- **Injection:** We give heparin as an injection under the skin. This is given at the same time every day.
- **Tablets:** Warfarin is the one of the oldest known drugs used for this condition. You will take this once a day, but will need regular blood tests to check the ability of the blood to form clots (INR test). The dose may need to change as warfarin is known to be affected by antibiotics and changes in the diet.

There are newer anti-coagulants available (Directly Acting Oral Anticoagulant (DOAC) like rivaroxaban, apixaban, dabigatran, edoxaban. These are taken 1 or 2 times a day. These do not need regular monitoring.

Your specialist nurse or doctor will help you choose the best option for you. You will be given information booklets and an alert card. You should keep this alert card with you in case of an emergency.

How long do I need to take these medicines for?

Your treatment is made just for you. It might last for 3 months, or even for your whole life. A specialist nurse will talk to you about this. You will see a doctor in 3 to 6 months to help decide what to do next. It is very important to take your medicine every day. **If you miss some doses, it can be very dangerous.** Only stop taking your blood-thinning medicine if a doctor tells you it is okay.

How long will my symptoms last?

Getting better after a blood clot in the lung (PE) is different for everyone. Some people feel better quickly, but for others, it can take many months to get back to how fit they were before.

Commonly asked questions

- **I have an appointment with the dentist, do I stop the medicines?**

Please talk with the GP about stopping any of these medicines. When the doctor says it is okay, you can stop your blood-thinning medicine for 1 to 2 days before a procedure. You can start taking it again after the procedure is finished. Sometimes, instead of tablets, you might need an injection for a short time. Your doctor will tell you if this is needed.

- **I have a surgery, do I stop the medicines?**

It depends on the type and site of surgery. The surgeons will advise you before the procedure. It is important for you tell them as soon as possible.



- **I have cut myself, do I stop the medicines?**

You will not need medical attention for smaller cuts and scrapes. They may take a little longer to stop bleeding. Please apply pressure to the site of the injury.

For larger cuts where there is a large amount of blood loss or where you cannot apply pressure, **please call 999.**

- **What are some symptoms to watch out for?**

If you have any of the following symptoms please stop taking your anti-coagulant and get medical help right away:

- unexpected or uncontrollable bleeding
- blood when you cough or are sick (vomit)
- black poo (stools) or blood in your poo
- a severe headache that will not go away, dizziness or weakness

- **What if I become suddenly unwell?**

Get medical help right if your symptoms get worse and you have:

- worsening pain
- shortness of breath
- dizziness
- bleeding

Contact details

If you have a question about your diagnosis or treatment you can call us on the Leicester Hospitals number **0300 303 1573** and ask to be put through to extension **12231**.

In the event of an emergency dial 999.

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Aby uzyskać informacje w innym języku, proszę zadzwonić pod podany niżej numer telefonu

Previous reference:

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