

Travel, exercise & life after a diagnosis of a blood clot

CARA DOYLE

HAEMATOLOGY NURSE

KING'S COLLEGE HOSPITAL, LONDON

Venous Thromboembolism (VTE)

Deep vein thrombosis

Pulmonary embolism



Symptoms of VTE

- Leg pain
- Swelling
- Redness
- Difficulty walking
- Shortness of breath
- Chest pain
- Coughing up blood
- No symptoms



Why me?

Provoked

- Hospital stay
- Long haul flight
- Pregnancy
- Family history

Unprovoked

- ?

Treatment



What now?

Can I work?

Can I travel?

Can I
exercise?

Will I get
another clot?

Can I work?

- Yes!
- You should get back to work as soon as you feel ready
- Depending on what your job involves you may have to make adjustments

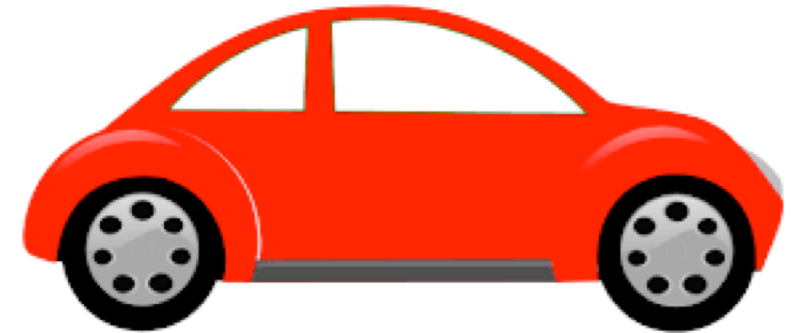
Can I exercise?

- Evidence has shown that light exercise can help reduce pain and swelling following a deep vein thrombosis
- Swimming can be very good for getting you started (although should be avoided if you have a clot in your upper arm, as should weight lifting)
- Six weeks is usually the time frame we advise for returning to normal physical activity
- Will always depend on how you are feeling and should be discussed with your specialist nurse

Can I travel?



- Not initially...
- We usually recommend waiting 6 weeks before you do any long distance travel
- Journeys less than 4 hours are ok
- Very important to stay well hydrated
- Take a walk at regular intervals/flex your calf muscle



Will I get another clot?



- There is no definitive answer
- The best thing is to employ all preventative measures advised by your doctor and live as healthy a lifestyle as possible
- Remember that family history of a blood clot is a risk factor

Psychological impact

“Five years later and anytime I have a symptom – my mind automatically thinks there’s the possibility it could be a clot”

“It was one of the scariest things I’ve had happen to me...I cried for the first week”

““It’s good to know that I’m not the only one who was overwhelmed after being diagnosed with a DVT; it was truly life changing.”

“I think of my husband witnessing my collapse in our home, an image that still haunts him even now.”

“you don’t really have time to assess the emotions. You’re kind of on auto pilot. Couple of years later, it catches up with you.”

“It never leaves you completely, the details, the memory of not being able to take a breath”

Perception

- Research has shown that a lack of patient information on thrombosis leads to poorer compliance with preventative measures
- What information did you receive? Did it answer all of your questions?
- What information were you given about future thrombosis?
- Raising awareness is so important

Patient thoughts

“[...] they’re in the news quite a bit with people dropping dead when getting off an aeroplane and things like that”

“they said it was probably pleurisy, gave me antibiotics [...] it was a pain I’d never had before.”

Prevention of thrombosis

- Avoiding episodes of immobility
- Taking preventative action, for example before a long journey
- Informing future healthcare professionals

Lifestyle

- Healthy diet
- No smoking
- Regular exercise
- Take medication

Looking ahead

- Recognising symptoms
- Knowing who to contact
- Knowing when not to worry

