

**BITESIZED
TEACHING**



Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT) and Pulmonary Embolism (PE)

**BITESIZED
TEACHING**

DVT / PE

Deep vein thrombosis (DVT) is a blood clot that develops within a deep vein in the body, usually in the leg. It can cause pain and swelling in the leg (especially the calf) and may lead to complications such as pulmonary embolism (PE) which is when the clot in the leg breaks off and travels to the lungs to cause a further blockage.

Symptoms of DVT

In some cases, there may be no symptoms of DVT. If symptoms do occur they can include:

- Pain, swelling and tenderness in one of the legs (usually the calf)
- A heavy ache in the affected area
- Warm skin in the area of the clot
- Red skin, particularly at the back of the leg below the knee

DVT usually (although not always) affects one leg. The pain may be worse when they bend the foot upward towards the knee.

Pulmonary embolism

If left untreated, about 1 in 10 people with a DVT will develop a pulmonary embolism.

Signs of a PE

- Breathlessness – which may come on gradually or suddenly
- Chest pain – which may become worse when you breathe in
- Sudden collapse



Causes and risk factors for a DVT

More common over the age of 40. As well as age, there are also a number of other risk factors, including:

- Being inactive for long periods – such as after an operation or during a long journey
- Blood vessel damage – a damaged blood vessel wall can result in the formation of a blood clot
- Having certain conditions or treatments that cause your blood to clot more easily than normal – such as cancer (including chemotherapy and radiotherapy treatment), heart and lung disease
- Being pregnant – blood also clots more easily during pregnancy
- Being overweight or obese
- The combined contraceptive pill and hormone replacement therapy (HRT) both contain the female hormone oestrogen, which causes the blood to clot more easily.



Ward Based Management

Measure circumference of both legs 10cm below knee, around the calf. Note the colour of the leg- is it especially pale or reddened? See if there is any localised pain.

Physical observations:

- Heart rate
- Blood Pressure
- Temperature
- Respiratory rate
- Call a doctor

