

Preventing blood clots in pregnancy

Information for patients

This information sheet explains the risk of blood clots during pregnancy and how to prevent them. If you have any queries, do not hesitate to speak to your midwife.

Confirming your identity

Before you have a treatment or procedure, our staff will ask you your **name and date of birth** and check your **ID band**. If you don't have an ID band we will also ask you to confirm your address.

If we don't ask these questions, then please ask us to check.
Ensuring your safety is our primary concern.

Why should I be concerned about blood clots?

During pregnancy and up to six weeks after giving birth, the risk of forming a blood clot is increased.

What is a blood clot?

A blood clot, known as a deep vein thrombosis, is most common in the leg or pelvis. It may cause swelling, redness, warmth and pain. If you experience any of these symptoms, you should go to your local Emergency Department immediately.

Deep vein thrombosis can lead to pulmonary embolism. This is a blood clot in the lungs and can cause shortness of breath, coughing, pain when breathing or even cause you to collapse, and is potentially life-threatening. If you have any of these symptoms, go to your local Emergency Department immediately.

Who is at risk?

When you book your pregnancy, we assess and record your risk of developing a blood clot. Your midwife will tell you if we have identified any risk factors. If we think you are at risk, we may advise you to have heparin blood thinning injections. These can be uncomfortable but are necessary to help prevent blood clots. Heparin is derived from pigs, so if you have concerns about using animal products please tell your doctor or midwife and they will discuss your concerns with you.

What can I do to reduce my risk?

- **Keep moving** – physical activity increases the blood flow and helps prevent clots. If you can, walk around at regular intervals. If not, bend and stretch your legs and ankles regularly to increase your blood flow.
- **Drink plenty** – being adequately hydrated helps to reduce the risk of forming blood clots.
- **Ask your midwife** if you have any questions about your risk.

What happens when I go home?

Stay active as much as possible and drink plenty of water. If we advised you to have injections to thin the blood, we will teach you how to self-inject and give you a box to safely store used syringes. The community midwife will collect this box once the course of injections is completed.

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) is a service that offers support, information and assistance to patients, relatives and visitors. They can also provide help and advice if you have a concern or complaint that staff have not been able to resolve for you.

PALS at King's College Hospital, Denmark Hill, London SE5 9RS:

Tel: **020 3299 3601**

Email: kch-tr.pals@nhs.net

You can also contact us by using our online form at www.kch.nhs.uk/contact/pals

PALS at Princess Royal University Hospital, Farnborough Common, Orpington, Kent BR6 8ND

Tel: **01689 863252**

Email: kch-tr.palskent@nhs.net

If you would like the information in this leaflet in a different language or format, please contact PALS on 020 3299 1844.

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