



Patient Information

Information following diagnosis of a Pulmonary Embolism (PE)

This leaflet explains about Pulmonary Embolism (PE) and how to treat it. If you have any further questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to speak to the nurse or doctor caring for you.

What is a PE?

A PE is a blockage of blood vessels in the lung. It can be a potentially serious or life-threatening condition.

What causes a PE?

It usually happens when a blood clot forms in one of the deep blood vessels (deep vein thrombosis), usually in the leg or pelvis, and travels to the lung. Sometimes a reason cannot be found as to why the blood clot has formed, but associated risk factors for blood clots include:

- previous blood clots or a family history of blood clots
- pregnancy or taking the oral contraceptive pill
- surgery or immobility
- long haul flights (and other travel if more than four hours in duration)
- being overweight
- increasing age
- cancer
- an underlying condition of 'sticky blood'.

How is a PE treated?

If you have a PE, your doctor will prescribe you an anticoagulant, which may be an injection or a tablet. This medicine prevents the blood from clotting as quickly as normal and will stop the blood clot getting any larger. This can help the symptoms of shortness of breath and/or chest pain to resolve over the course of time as the blood clot is being treated.

Treatment is generally continued for between 3 to 6 months, the actual duration will be determined by your specialist team which will be the Anticoagulant, Respiratory or Haematology team.

When do I need to seek further advice?

You should seek further advice immediately if you develop any new or worsening symptoms, such as: chest pain or breathlessness, coughing or vomiting blood or any excessive bruising or bleeding.



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What do I need to do after I go home?

- You may find that your physical activity is limited due to your symptoms. You should avoid prolonged periods of exercise in the first few weeks, and ensure you take enough rest.
- If you need pain relief, paracetamol is safe to take with anticoagulant. **Aspirin and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, such as ibuprofen, should be avoided**, unless under the guidance of your GP. This is because they may interfere with your treatment.
- Always check with your GP or pharmacist before taking any medication, including herbal or alternative treatments, to ensure they are safe to take with your treatment.
- Try to eat a healthy, balanced diet, and to avoid excessive changes in your weight during your treatment. Alcohol can interfere with anticoagulation medication, so it is recommended that you do not drink more than one to two units of alcohol per day. Stopping smoking is also advisable.
- Ideally, long distance travel is not advisable until you are stable on anticoagulation and your symptoms are controlled.

Will I have a follow-up appointment?

Once you have been diagnosed with a PE, you will be seen by the **Anticoagulation team** in the Great Western Hospital. This may be a face to face or a telephone consultation.

You may be referred for further specialist advice to either the Respiratory Team or the Haematology team.

Useful sources of information:

NHS Choices: www.nhs.uk/conditions/bloodclots

Thrombosis UK: www.thrombosisuk.org

NHS Quit Smoking: www.nhs.uk/live-well/quit-smoking

Contact us:

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact the Same Day Emergency Care unit on 01793 604454 Monday to Friday 08:00 – 20:00

Or the Anticoagulant Clinic on 01793 604051 Monday to Friday 09:00 – 17:00

Alternative out of hours:

NHS 111 - Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available 24 hours a day

This information sheet is available to order in other languages and formats. If you would like a copy, please contact us on 01793 604031 or email gwh.pals@nhs.net

Document Control

Division: Integrated & Community Care

Department: Anticoagulant Clinic

Approved Date: 2 June 2021

Next Review Date: July 2024

Document Number: I&CC - PIL086