

TRAVELLER'S THROMBOSIS

With record numbers of people setting off for a relaxing break *all travellers* should take precautions to avoid getting a deep vein thrombosis (DVT) not just those flying.

Even if you aren't flying but plan to spend hours on a train, bus, or car the following advice will help reduce your chances of getting a DVT:

- Exercise your calf muscles regularly, by contracting them every so often and, where possible, by getting up and moving around.
- Do not drink excessive amounts of alcohol, as it will dehydrate you.
- If you are wearing special medical stockings you must make sure they are a good fit as ill fitting ones can cause more harm than good.
- Do not take sleeping tablets as they can result in you sleeping in an awkward, immobile position.

Although there has been a lot of media attention around DVT, the risk to anyone who is in good health is probably less than one in every 10,000 long haul journeys, so travellers should not be unnecessarily worried.

Medical Director, Dr Beverley Hunt advises: "Although there is an increased risk to people with the condition 'sticky blood' and women on the combined oral contraceptive pill this can be helped by taking the advice above.

"Taller and smaller people are also slightly more at risk than others; tall people for all types of long distance travel and smaller people mainly during air travel as they may not be able to rest their feet comfortably on the floor, causing the legs to dangle and adding extra pressure to the back of the knees."

However low the risk, travellers should take some simple precautions as a deep vein thrombosis can be dangerous. A blood clot in the leg can break up and travel through your body; it can eventually block blood circulation to your lungs.

In the unlikely event that in the weeks following a long-haul flight or journey you do develop symptoms like pain and swelling in either of your legs or unexpected shortness of breath and/or chest pain you should seek medical advice immediately.

This document is intended to provide general information only and is not intended to provide personal advice or as a substitute for advice covering a specific situation. Readers should seek appropriate advice before taking or refraining from taking any action in response to information contained in this document.

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