

Preventing Blood Clots

After surgery, a fracture, a plaster, or long travel

Why this matters

When a leg stays still, blood can clot in the deep veins. A clot causes a painful swollen leg — and a piece can travel to the lungs, which is life-threatening. Almost all of this is preventable with simple measures.

ANKLE PUMPING — DO THIS HOURLY WHILE AWAKE

Point your toes down, then pull them up towards your knee. **Twenty times, every hour** that you are awake. Do it with both legs, including the plastered one if your toes are free.

Also tighten and release your thigh and buttock muscles ten times each hour.

It sounds trivial. It is one of the most effective things you can do.

The rest of it

- **Get up and move** as early and as often as we allow. Even a short walk to the toilet counts. Sitting still all day is the problem.
- **Drink plenty of water.** Dehydration thickens the blood.
- Take your **blood-thinning injection or tablet** for the full number of days prescribed — not until you feel better.
- Wear the **compression stockings** if given. Put them on in the morning before getting up and keep them smooth — a rolled-down stocking acts like a tourniquet.
- **Stop smoking.** On long journeys, walk the aisle or stop the car every 1–2 hours.

GO TO HOSPITAL IMMEDIATELY IF YOU GET

In the leg: pain, tenderness or cramping in the calf · swelling of one leg · redness or warmth · the calf feeling tight and hard

In the chest: sudden breathlessness · chest pain that is worse on breathing in · coughing up blood · a racing heart · fainting

Do not wait to see if it settles. Do not massage a painful swollen calf.

Search: DVT prevention, blood clot, leg swelling, ankle pump exercise, travel clot

