

TRAVEL, SURGERY and DEEP VENOUS THROMBOSIS

DVT (Deep Vein Thrombosis) is a blood clot which can occur within the deep veins of the legs due to prolonged sitting or immobility. A PE (Pulmonary Embolism) is a clot within the lungs, which usually has travelled from the veins in your legs via your bloodstream.

When travelling for prolonged periods (four hours or more), whether by plane, bus, car or train with prolonged sitting and reduction in movement, your risk of developing a DVT increases. This can also be true if you take multiple flights over a short period. Your risk may remain higher after travel for as long as four weeks.

Surgery involving a general anaesthetic (asleep) also carries a risk of thrombosis because of the effects of surgery on tissues and immobility during the operation.

Travel before surgery If travelling for four hours or more before surgery, a scoring system has been devised (right) to assess how long your surgery may need to be delayed. However, please remember this is only a guide for you to consider, as it is impossible to calculate absolute risk.

Add up your total score:

Score 0 – Okay to have surgery one week after long travel

Score 1 – Suggest delay of two weeks between long travel and surgery

Score 2 or more – Suggest delay of four weeks between long travel and surgery

If your surgery is more urgent, then the risks of proceeding will need to be assessed and discussed with you by your surgeon / anaesthetist.

Travel after surgery You should consider your individual risk, taking into account all of the factors described above, and discuss with your doctor if you are unsure.

Minor hand operations or those lasting less than 60 minutes – wait at least 24 hours after surgery.

Major or more extensive upper limb operations or those lasting 90 minutes or more - wait at least seven days after surgery.

We would advise that if flying after an operation to check with your individual airline as each have their own guidelines. Also make sure your travel insurers are informed and please be aware this may increase the price of travel insurance for cover abroad.

Risk factor for DVT & PE

Previous blood clot in legs or lungs
 Known pre-disposition to blood clots
 Cancer
 Smoking
 Recent surgery or physical injury
 Immobility (reduced movement)
 Age (> 60)
 Oestrogen use (oral contraceptives & HRT)
 Pregnancy
 Obesity (Body Mass Index > 30)

Factor Score	
Age > 60	1
BMI > 30	1
Smoking	1
Active cancer and its treatment	2
Known thrombophilic disorder	1
On HRT or tamoxifen	1
Varicose veins	1
Previous blood clot	2
Parent or sibling has had blood clot	1
Due for surgery lasting > 90min	1
Acute infection (viral or bacterial)	1
General health problems (High blood pressure, diabetes, stroke, heart or lung problems)	1
TOTAL	