



Waitemata
District Health Board

Best Care for Everyone



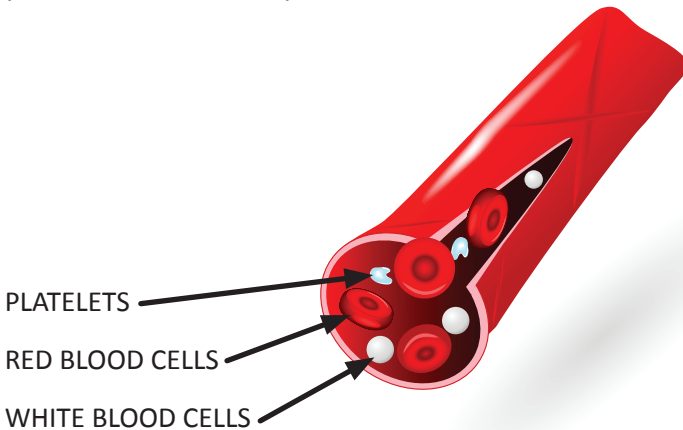
Cancer and Thrombosis

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What you need to know
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Cancer and Thrombosis

People with cancer often have a higher number of platelets and clotting factors in their blood. This may occur because the cancer cells produce and release substances which stimulate the body to make more platelets. Platelets are blood cells which play a very important role in helping your blood clot.

Clotting factors are proteins made naturally by the body. They combine with platelets to help form blood clots and prevent bleeding. If you have more platelets and higher amounts of clotting factors than normal in your body then your blood is more likely to form clots.



Treating Blood clots

Blood clots are usually treated with drugs known as anticoagulants. Anticoagulants slow the body's own clotting mechanism and help prevent the formation of further clots.

What is a thrombosis?

Thrombosis is the medical word for a blood clot. Clots can form in veins in different places in the body.

Blood is pumped around your body by your heart. Blood flowing away from your heart is carried in arteries and blood returns to the heart in veins. A

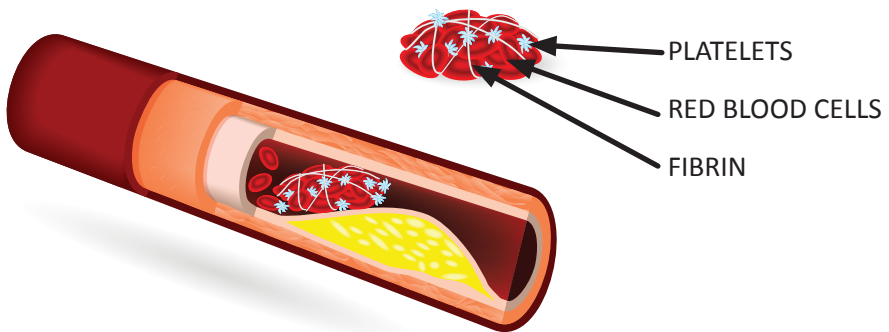
thrombosis can form in an artery or a vein; if it forms in an artery it may cause a heart attack or a stroke. If it forms in a vein it may cause a deep vein thrombosis (DVT) or a pulmonary embolism (PE)

What have I got wrong with me?

Your problem is caused by a thrombosis blocking the normal blood flow in one of your veins.

Deep vein thrombosis (DVT)

If you have a DVT, it usually means that a clot has formed in the veins deep inside your leg. It may be in the calf or lower leg, behind the knee or in the thigh or upper leg. It is possible to have a DVT in your arm or your abdomen but this is less common.



How do I know if I have DVT

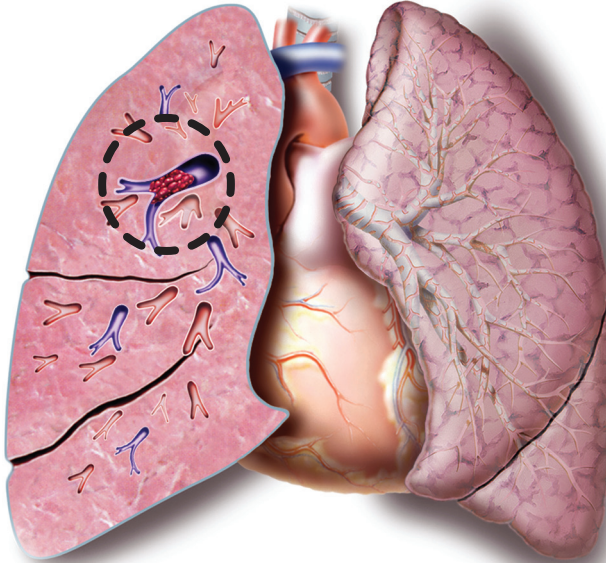
These are the most common symptoms of a DVT but not everyone has all these symptoms:

- Pain
- Swelling
- Redness
- Warmth

If there is a thrombosis in the veins the blood cannot drain out normally. The pressure in the limb rises and causes pain, swelling and inflammation.

Pulmonary embolism (PE)

If you have a PE, it usually means that a clot has travelled to your lung. A small PE may not cause any symptoms, but a large one can cause breathing difficulties, fainting episodes and can even be fatal.



How do I know if I have a PE

These are the most common symptoms of a PE but not everyone has all these symptoms:

- Shortness of Breath
- Chest pain
- Cough

A PE can be dangerous. If you have a DVT it is important for you come to hospital as soon as possible if you notice difficulty in breathing, chest pain or if you feel faint.

How do we treat thrombosis

Clexane is the drug of choice to treat your thrombosis when you have cancer or a cancer is suspected. This is because it can be temporarily withheld if your doctor wishes to perform further procedures and it does not interact with or is affected by other medications ie chemotherapy agents. Research also confirms that this is the best medication to treat thrombosis in people with an underlying cancer.

Anticoagulants slow the body's own clotting mechanism and prevent the further formation of clots. This allows the body to break down the clots naturally.

Clexane is given as an injection under the skin (subcutaneous). It gets into the bloodstream very quickly and starts to work within a few hours of your first injection. The dose is calculated from your weight.

You will be given instructions about how and when to have the injections. Ongoing supplies are available from your local pharmacy and you can contact your GP for ongoing prescriptions.

There are new anticoagulant medications available for treating thrombosis but as yet they have not been proven to work well in patients with cancer. This may change in the future as clinical trials designed to evaluate this are completed.

What are the side effects of treatment

There is a small risk of bleeding while taking anticoagulants. This risk is higher after surgery and in people who have previously had bleeding problems. If bleeding occurs the medicine may need to be stopped. More rarely, some patients may experience a rash or a reaction in their platelet count. You should contact your doctor immediately if you have:

- Severe nose bleeds
- Blood in your urine or bowel motions
- Black bowel motions
- Severe nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea or abdominal pain
- Severe headache
- Unusual bruising or swelling
- Rash, especially if directly around the injection site.

How long will I be on treatment?

Your specialist will decide how long you need to be treated for. This will depend on the extent of your thrombosis and how your cancer is being treated. You may benefit from indefinite anticoagulation as you may be at risk of getting another clot if the anticoagulation is stopped too soon.

Activity

The pain of a DVT and PE usually reduces within a few days of beginning treatment. Some discomfort may return once you resume your normal activities but symptoms of the thrombosis should improve quite quickly. It is normal to have some pain, swelling and heaviness in your leg. This is usually worse at the end of the day or after standing or walking for long periods. It usually improves overnight or with elevation of the leg. A Class II compression stocking may help ease leg symptoms. Your doctor or thrombosis nurse can advise you about this. In general your symptoms should be gradually improving and not getting worse.

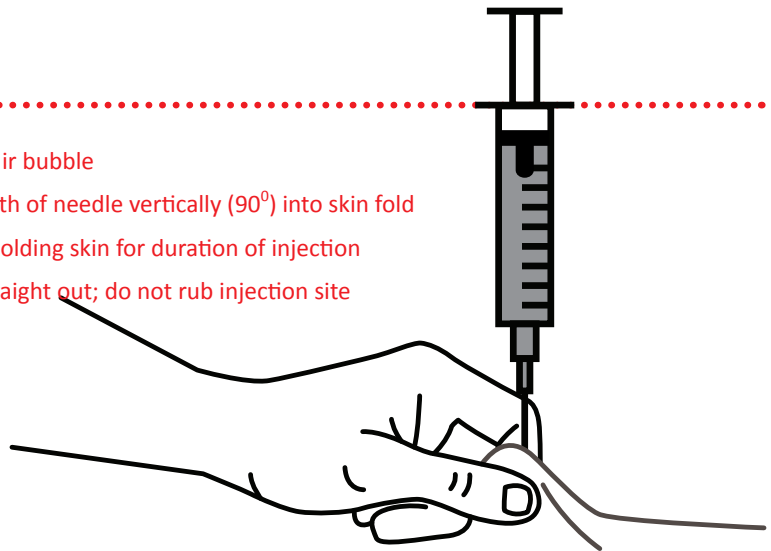
You should be able to continue your usual activities while you are taking anticoagulants unless these activities are likely to cause injury. Increase your activities gradually and as you feel able to.

How to Administer your Clexane

- Wash your hands well with soap and water
- Ensure the selected injection site is clean (no need to use alcohol swabs).
- Alternate the site of injections between the right and left sides of the abdomen.
- Do not expel the air. Tap the syringe so that the air bubble rises to the plunger end of the syringe.
- Pinch an area of your abdomen between thumb and forefinger to a make a fold of skin, you will need to hold this fold of skin until you have removed the needle.
- Vertically insert the full length of the needle (at a 90 degree angle) into the skin fold. To reduce bruising, do not rub.
- Drop the used syringe—needle first—into the sharps collector provided—do not recap before placing in the container



- Do not expel air bubble
- Inject full length of needle vertically (90°) into skin fold
- Inject slowly holding skin for duration of injection
- Pull needle straight out; do not rub injection site



Syringe disposal

Place the sharps container out of reach of children. When the container is full, you can return it to your GP, local pharmacist or hospital for disposal. Please note: There may be a cost for the disposal of sharps containers at your community pharmacy.

DO NOT put it in your household rubbish.



Extra Facts

- It is important that you do not run out of this medicine, if you are running low please contact your GP for a repeat prescription.
- If over time you lose weight or have other changes to your health such as kidney problems you should let your GP or specialist know.
- For some people, the dose and how often they need this medicine can change over time.
- You may also require blood tests to check that the correct dose of medicine is being taken.
- Clexane can be taken with most medications but always check with your doctor before starting any new medications.

- Avoid injecting your self too close to your belly button or around existing scars or bruises.
- The slower you inject into your skin the less it will sting.
- You will need to let your dentist know if you are having dental work done.
- Thrombosis in your limb or lung usually does not cause a heart attack or stroke.



Patient Information

Name:.....

NHI number:.....

Name of medication:.....

Dose:.....

How often:.....

Your Weight:.....

Additional Information:

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Contact details

Thrombosis service

North Shore Hospital

(09) 486 8900 ext 3788

Mobile 021 245 0522

Waitakere Hospital

(09) 486 8900 ext 6806

Mobile 021 243 5966



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