Patient Information

Exercise after a Blood Clot

This leaflet is for general information only. It does not replace clinical advice.

The following exercises can also help to prevent clots when you are sitting for prolonged periods of time. Try to remember to perform them every hour while you are sitting down. Make sure to also stay hydrated by drinking plenty of water.

ANKLE PUMPS

Sitting in a chair, move your feet up and down as in the picture.
(30 repetitions per hour)

KNEE EXTENSIONS

Straighten one knee, then slowly lower your foot to the floor, bending your knee. Repeat on your opposite leg.
(30 repetitions per hour)

SEATED MARCHING

Sitting un a chair, slowly lift your knee up as much as possible in a marching movement, then slowly lower it. Alternate legs.
(30 repetitions per hour)

Irish Society of Chartered Physiotherapists

For further information:
www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/cspd/ncps/vte/resources/

EXERCISE AFTER A BLOOD CLOT

After experiencing a blood clot, which can appear as a pulmonary embolism (PE), a blood clot in the lungs, or a deep vein thrombosis (DVT), a blood clot in one arm or leg, it's important to get back into exercising. Starting an exercise routine within weeks of diagnosis will help your recovery. For many people, this can be a challenge. Walking, swimming or cycling are good options to begin with.

BEGINNER WALKING PROGRAM

Try to choose a route that is close to home, is relatively flat, and has plenty of places to rest along the way. Warm up by walking slowly for 5 minutes.

Your goal is to walk for a minimum of 30-45 minutes every day.

- Week 1: Walk for 5 minutes at a comfortable pace 3 times per day.
- Week 2: Walk for 10 minutes twice a day.
- Week 3: Walk for 15 minutes twice a day.
- Week 4: Walk for 20 minutes twice a day.
- Week 5: Walk for 40 minutes, once a day.

Always cool down by walking extra slowly for 5 minutes.
If walking is not for you, other types of exercise to consider which are not load bearing, are swimming or cycling.

STRENGTH TRAINING

It is safe to return to your routine if you already have a strength training programme. If you want to begin weight training, and have never lifted weights before, it is recommened that you seek professional advice. Ask you Doctor for a referral to a physiotherapist or a professional who can create an individualised strength training programm for you.

SHORTNESS OF BREATH AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

When you exert yourself physically doing exercise, it is normal to experience some shortness of breath (SOB). You can use SOB to monitor how hard you are exercising. On a scale of breathlessness from 10 – 0 with '10' being maximally short of breath and '0' not being out of breath at all, you should aim to reach 3-5 on this scale for a safe moderate intensity work-out. This means that while you are exercising you can still hold a short conversation, but it is noticeably more difficult to speak, than when you are at rest. Shortness of breath should settle once you stop exercising. If you are experiencing shortness of breath that does not settle after exercising and is getting worse, seek medical attention.

PREVENTING ANOTHER BLOOD CLOT

There are many reasons why someone might develop a blood clot. One of those risk factors is long periods of decreased activity, such as sitting on a plane or in a car for several hours or in an armchair/bed at home. While there is a very low overall risk of developing a blood clot due to long periods of sitting, periodic movement may help prevent another blood clot. For any plane, train or car trips longer than 4 hours, get up from your seat or stop driving and walk for 5 minutes every hour.