

## LONG DISTANCE TRAVEL+ THROMBOEMBOLISM

Travelling long distances may increase the risk of developing blood clots in the vessels of the legs - a condition called Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT). This is sometimes called 'economy class syndrome', when it develops after flying long distances in cramped conditions.

If you are immobile for long periods of time, blood can pool in your legs and form CLOTS. This is possible if you are sitting in a plane or another form of transport without moving for several hours.

This can cause prolonged calf pain and swelling.

Rarely, a clot can travel elsewhere in your body such as your lungs, and this can lead to a potentially dangerous pulmonary embolus with shortness of breath and chest pain.

Groups of people that are at higher risk of developing a DVT include:

Smokers

Women taking the oral contraceptive

Pregnant women

People with previous history of DVT

People with a family history of DVT

Overweight people

People with certain conditions of the blood

People with decreased mobility eg. anyone injured or after having an operation



For the average traveller without higher risks, it is an unusual complication of travel. Some simple measures can help you avoid developing a DVT:

EXERCISING calf and thigh muscles for a few minutes, preferably every 1-2 hours by 'walking' on the spot if you are unable to get out of your seat, or by moving your ankles up and down. SUPPORT STOCKINGS are advisable if people are affected by ankle swelling. It is also important to AVOID DEHYDRATION by drinking adequate amounts of water whilst avoiding excessive alcohol and coffee intake. Try to organise an AISLE SEAT if possible so it is easier to get up and walk around. ELEVATE your feet if possible, but don't cross your legs. Wear COMFORTABLE shoes and unrestrictive CLOTHING, avoiding articles that are tight around the waist and groin.

For those at higher risk, there are injections that can be prescribed to prevent blood clots and very high-risk passengers can be placed on full medical anticoagulation to thin their blood under medical supervision. Please discuss this with your travel medicine specialist if you have any concerns.

EXERCISES TO REDUCE THE RISK OF DVT's:

Leaving the balls of your feet on the floor, raise both of your heels then release. Repeat x5

Leaving the heels of your feet on the floor, lift the balls of your feet, then release. Repeat x 5

Straighten your legs as far as the space in front of you will allow. Tighten the muscles in the front of your thigh, hold for 2-3 seconds, then release. Repeat x5

