

Travel and altitude advice

Information for people using combined hormonal contraceptive methods or Hormone Replacement Therapy



Travel

Long journeys (**more than four hours**) by plane, train, etc, are thought to cause a slightly increased risk of Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT). This is probably due to sitting immobile and cramped for long periods. Because there is an increased risk of blood clot while you are using the pill/patch/ring or hormone replacement therapy (HRT) you should follow the advice below carefully. For those using the pill/patch/ring bear in mind that your risks of DVT are much higher if you are pregnant so it is important to continue with an effective method of contraception when you are travelling. Discuss your travel plans with the doctor or nurse if you have any concerns.

To reduce the risk of blood clot when travelling long distances

- Drink plenty of water
- Avoid pre or in-flight alcohol and coffee
- Carry out simple leg exercises regularly e.g. rotate foot in circular motion using the ankle, point toes firmly away from the leg and then pull foot upwards towards the shin
- Take occasional walks when able during travel. Don't sit with crossed legs or ankles
- Consider taking a single dose of aspirin (150mg) before travel*
- Consider using **flight socks**. There is some evidence to suggest that compression stockings can help to prevent travel related DVT. Some doctors advise that all adults should wear them on long-haul flights. You can buy the stockings from pharmacies. Ask the pharmacist for advice about the correct sort. They need to be 'graduated compression' stockings, worn to the knee, with the correct amount of compression (class 2). The slight pressure from the stocking helps to prevent blood 'pooling' in the calf. Stockings do not replace the need for regular exercises. They are in addition to exercises.

**Some people cannot take aspirin – read manufacturer's leaflet carefully or seek medical advice. This leaflet gives general advice. If you have any illness or other risk factors you should seek more specific medical advice*

Altitude

There is some evidence that the risk of blood clotting may be increased at **extreme** high altitude. If you are going to spend time at high altitude e.g. trekking in the Himalayas you should not continue to use the combined pill/patch/ring. Seek advice from your doctor about alternative methods of contraception, which will not increase your risk of blood clot.

