

## ***Treating Venous Thromboembolism at Home***

In the past, venous thromboembolism had to be treated in the hospital. However, with new medicine (called low weight molecular heparin) now available, many people with venous thromboembolism can be treated safely at home.

### **What is venous thromboembolism?**

It includes two conditions—deep vein thrombosis and pulmonary embolism. *Deep vein thrombosis* is the formation of a blood clot within one of the large veins in the leg. If not treated properly, part of the clot can break off from the wall of the vein and travel through the blood supply to lungs. Pieces of the clot that clog the arteries in the lungs cause *pulmonary embolism*.

### **How will I be treated for venous thromboembolism?**

You will likely receive two medications:

- one medication given in one or two injections (underneath the skin) every day for 5-7 days
- another taken by mouth once a day over a longer period.

Both medications belong to a class of drugs known as anticoagulants. Anticoagulants do not break up existing clots; instead, they stop existing clots from getting larger and new clots from forming. Your body's own defense system will break up existing clots.

### **Will it be difficult to give myself injections?**

Many patients can give the injections of the first medication to themselves at home. If suitable, you or a family member will be given instructions on giving these injections.

### **What are some of the side effects of these medications?**

A small number of patients may have bleeding. Contact your doctor if you notice:

- unusual bleeding or bruising (e.g., bleeding gums, red spots on the skin, nose bleeds)
- unusually heavy menstrual bleeding
- blood in urine or stool; black tarry stools
- back pain or stomach pain
- cold, blue, or painful feet

Other minor side effects include skin irritation, pain, and bruises at the place where you inject the medication.

### **Should I avoid other medications while I'm on these medications?**

Always check with your doctor before starting any new prescription or over-the-counter medication—particularly medications that contain aspirin or non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs like ibuprofen (Advil®, Motrin®, Nuprin®) and naproxen (Aleve®). Alcohol and some food can interact with these medications. Ask your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist for more information.

*Adapted from:* Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT) Home Treatment Program <http://www.umassmed.edu/outcomes/dvt/dvtguide.html>

