

Preventing and treating blood clots



The information provided in this document is for patients prescribed CLEXANE, and should be used as a guide in understanding your medical condition and treatment. This document is not a substitute for professional medical care and advice. If you have any questions or concerns about the information provided within this document or your treatment, please consult your doctor.

The facts

Blood clotting is the body's natural way of stopping us bleeding. Clotting only becomes a problem when it blocks the blood flow.

Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT) occurs when a thrombus (blood clot) forms in one of the large veins, usually in the leg, leading to either partial or complete blockage of blood circulation. This may also result in development of leg ulcers.

Pulmonary Embolism (PE) occurs when a fragment of a blood clot breaks loose from the vein and travels to the lungs. This is a dangerous condition which may be fatal.

What causes a blood clot?

Some people have blood clotting disorders but one of the biggest risks for developing a clot is being immobile.

Risk Factors

- ▶ Cancer
- ▶ Age over 60
- ▶ Overweight
- ▶ Lung disease
- ▶ Major surgery
- ▶ Inherited blood disorders
- ▶ Clotting abnormalities
- ▶ Previous DVT
- ▶ Smoking
- ▶ Heart failure
- ▶ Previous stroke
- ▶ Joint replacement
- ▶ Immobility

Prevention in hospital

Some of the measures to help reduce your risk of developing a clot include:

- ▶ Blood thinning medication, like Clexane.
- ▶ Wearing compression stockings
- ▶ Intermittent pneumatic compression – Inflatable calf compression
- ▶ Foot exercises (e.g. wiggling toes, rotating ankles)
- ▶ Mobilising as soon as possible

Prevention at home

- ▶ Avoid sitting around for long periods. Get up and move around at least once an hour.
- ▶ When sitting, you can do heel/toe lifts. This causes the calf muscles to contract and moves blood in your leg veins.
- ▶ If at risk, drink plenty of fluids (if you are not water restricted on your doctor's advice) and avoid alcohol as it can contribute to dehydration.
- ▶ If you must drive a long distance, make frequent stops and walk around.
- ▶ If you are at very high risk of developing a clot, it may be suggested that you continue to have blood thinning medication or compression stockings on discharge. Ensure that a clinician has explained the purpose and length of these treatments.

Symptoms of DVT

- ▶ Pain and tenderness in the leg
- ▶ Swelling of the lower leg, ankle and foot
- ▶ Red and warm skin

Symptoms of PE

- ▶ Shortness of breath
- ▶ Sharp chest pains
- ▶ Fainting

If you develop any of these symptoms, immediately bring them to the attention of a medical practitioner/nurse.

What is CLEXANE?

CLEXANE is one of a group of medicines called low molecular weight heparins (LMWH). These medicines work by reducing blood clotting activity.

CLEXANE is used in a number of medical conditions. It is used to:

- ▶ treat blood clots
- ▶ treat certain types of heart disease (e.g. angina and heart attacks), when used with aspirin
- ▶ prevent blood clots forming after an operation, during hospitalisation or during purification of the blood by an artificial kidney (haemodialysis).

Your doctor may have prescribed CLEXANE for another reason.

Ask your doctor if you have any questions about why CLEXANE has been prescribed for you.



Advice about CLEXANE

Above all, it is important that you carefully follow your doctor's instructions regarding the correct use and administration of CLEXANE.

After you have fully read this guide, contact your doctor if you still have any questions about CLEXANE or how to inject yourself properly.

Since you have been advised to give yourself CLEXANE at home, you should receive instructions on the proper use of CLEXANE and the technique for self-injection. This instruction should come from your doctor or other qualified healthcare professionals before giving yourself an injection for the first time.

While you are using CLEXANE, your doctor may wish to do blood tests from time to time. It is important that you keep these appointments so your doctor can monitor your progress.

CLEXANE must not be given to anyone other than the person it has been prescribed for.

Remember to take CLEXANE at the same time each day.

For instructions on what to do if you miss a dose, contact your doctor immediately.

Always keep CLEXANE, your used syringes, and all other medications out of the reach of children.

Be sure to follow your doctor's instructions carefully.

Give only the number of CLEXANE injections your doctor has prescribed for you each day.

Getting ready to self-administer

CLEXANE should be injected into the layer of fat just under the skin in your abdomen.

CLEXANE should never be injected into muscle as bleeding into the muscle may occur.

By gently pinching the skin between your fingers throughout the injection, the medicine only enters the fatty tissue of your abdomen and not the muscle.

The area of the injection should be on the right or left side of your abdomen, at least 5 cm (2 inches) away from your belly button and out towards the side of the abdomen.

Injection Sites

When choosing an injection site be sure:

- ▶ That the site is easy to reach.
- ▶ To avoid injecting yourself too close to your belly button or around existing scars or bruises.
- ▶ To alternate your injections between the left and right sides of your abdomen.

It is important to look at old injection sites for:

Redness, pain, warmth, puffiness, discolouration of the skin, or oozing, which could be signs of infection or skin reaction.

If you do notice any of the signs listed above, contact your doctor immediately.



Just follow these steps...

Your doctor or nurse should give you instructions on using Clexane and the proper technique for self-injection. If you have any questions regarding your medication or how to inject yourself, please ask your doctor.

1

Wash your hands and the injection site with soap and water. Dry your hands.

2

Sit or lie in a comfortable position so you can easily see the area of your abdomen where you will be injecting.

A lounge chair, recliner or bed propped up with pillows is ideal.



3

Select an area on the right or left side of your abdomen at least 5 cm from your belly button, towards your side.



4

Remember to alternate injection sides (left and right side of abdomen) for each injection.

5

Hold the syringe with the needle pointing away from you. Remove the needle cap, taking care not to touch the needle. The air bubble in the syringe should not be expelled.



If you require a dose adjustment, see below.*

*ADJUSTING THE DOSE: In some cases, your doctor will instruct you to adjust the dose of Clexane. The volume to be injected should be measured precisely using the markings on the syringe, according to the dosage recommended by your doctor. When adjusting to the correct dose, hold the syringe with the needle tip pointing down. Depress the plunger so the bottom of the air bubble is level with the marking on the syringe, corresponding to the dose given to you by your doctor.

6

Hold the syringe in the hand you write with, and with the needle pointing down. With your other hand, gently pinch the selected area of your abdomen between your thumb and forefinger to create a fold of skin. Be sure to hold the skin fold throughout the injection.

7

Vertically insert the full length of the needle (at a 90° angle) into the skin fold.



8

Press down on the plunger with your thumb or finger. This will deliver the medication into the fatty tissue of your abdomen. Be sure to hold the skin fold throughout the injection.

9

Remove the needle by pulling it straight out. You can now let go of the skin fold. To avoid bruising, do not rub the injection site after completion of the injection.

10

Drop the used syringe - needle first - into the Sharps Container. Close the lid tightly and place the container out of reach of children. When the container is full, give it to your doctor or home care nurse for disposal. **DO NOT** put in your household rubbish.



Do's and Don'ts

- ✓ **DO** take Clexane at the same time each day, for exactly the number of days your doctor tells you
- ✓ **DO** alternate injection sites (left and right side of abdomen) for each injection
- ✓ **DO** contact your doctor immediately if you miss a dose, take too much, or experience any side effects
- ✓ **DO** always talk to your doctor if you have any questions or concerns about your treatment or the injection instructions
- ✗ **DON'T** inject into bruised or scarred areas
- ✗ **DON'T** pinch the skin fold too hard
- ✗ **DON'T** rub the injection site after injection, as this may cause bruising

Useful medical terms

Antithrombotic – An agent that prevents or interferes with the formation of a clot.

Anticoagulants – Any substance that prevents the blood clotting and treats an established clot.

CLEXANE – A low molecular weight heparin (LMWH) that reduces the blood's ability to form clots.

Heparin/LMWH – Type of anticoagulant given by injection to help prevent clots developing, getting bigger or breaking away to form an embolus.

Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT) – An undesirable blood clot that usually occurs in the veins of the leg.

Embolus – A blood clot that has formed within a vein.

Embolism – A clot that travels through the blood stream, lodges in a vessel and blocks it.

Pulmonary embolism – Obstruction to a blood vessel in the lung by a clot.

Superficial thrombosis – A clot in a vein near the skin.

Thrombus – A medical term for a blood clot.

Ultrasound – A way of detecting blood clots.

Venography – X-ray technique that reveals veins in the leg and detects blood clots in these vessels.

Useful phone numbers

Your GP:

Your specialist:





Your information portal for all
VTE matters

You are one click away from:

- ▶ Information on thrombosis and VTE
- ▶ Learning about the risk factors of VTE
- ▶ Finding resources for managing VTE

www.vtematters.com.au



**For more information on how to use CLEXANE,
please visit the following website:**

www.vtematters.com.au/resources

Password: support
(Please note that the password is case sensitive)



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