

**Subject:**

Petition PE1056

**PE1056/Q****From:** Gordon McPherson**Sent:** Wednesday, December 15, 2010 11:50 AM**To:** David F (Franck)**Subject:** RE: Petition PE1056

Good Morning Franck

Thank you for the information contained within your email. As you know our petition was split into 3 sections:

- 1 to urge the Scottish Executive to introduce mandatory assessment tools for all health boards for the diagnosis of deep vein thrombosis (DVT)
- 2 to ensure commonality of patient guidance information regarding DVT;
- 3 to introduce a newborn screening programme for the Factor V gene, which has been shown to increase susceptibility to DVT

With the publication of Sign guideline the first section should be covered.

Regarding item 2, I would ask you to read the e mail attached which shows the result of a recent F.O.I carried out September 2010. This shows that there has been no positive move by the Health Boards since the raising of Petition 1056. If the general public are not given consistent information then this is a great failing by the Health Boards taking into consideration the letter of 2008 from the Chief Medical Officer and Chair of NHSQIS.

Under Freedom of Information I would like to ask if you as a Health Board have an information leaflet available to the General Public freely i.e. not just the leaflet available after someone has been screened for DVT or has just been discharged from hospital.

I have now received 11 replies out of the 14 requests, 2 positives and 9 negatives.

Positives

NHSWESTERN ISLES  
NHSSHETLANDS

Both have the Lifeblood leaflet

Negatives

NHS DUMFRIES and GALLOWAY

NHS FORTH VALLEY

NHS AYRSHIRE and ARRAN

NHS FIFE

NHS ORKNEY

NHS GRAMPIAN

NHS Lothian

NHS BORDERS

NHS HIGHLANDS

Although they did say information could be accessed via computer or if the patient asked for the Health Board to access the internet for them!!

That leaves 3 Health Boards who did not even respond to the FOI.

Yesterday I received a copy of NHS Orkney's hard copy leaflet they hand out to people who ask for information (I have attached the leaflet to this e-mail).When you view the leaflet you will note it bears no resemblance to the information leaflet recommended by the Chair of NHSQIS and the C.M.O. The update to SIGN guidelines 35 and 62 on which the Minister for Public Health and the Minister for Health and Wellbeing have in the past stated will include information for lay people will be launched on December 10th in Edinburgh

Regarding item 3 the evidence from the C.M.O. is that this will not happen.

Regards

Gordon McPherson

Knowledge About Thrombosis Is Essential.....K.A.T.I.E.

FOI & Data Protection

Balfour Hospital  
New Scapa Road  
Kirkwall  
Orkney KW15 1BH  
[www.ohb.scot.nhs.uk](http://www.ohb.scot.nhs.uk)



Gordon McPherson

Date: 10<sup>th</sup> November 2010

Tel: 01856 888 220  
Fax: 01856 888 211  
Enquiries to: Mrs Kirsty Sutherland  
Email: [kirsty.sutherland@nhs.net](mailto:kirsty.sutherland@nhs.net)

Dear Mr McPherson,

**RE: FOI Request for Information – request**

**re: DVT Information Leaflet**

Please find enclosed hard copy leaflet which is available for patients. Additional information is also available on NHS Orkney's website [www.ohb.scot.nhs.uk](http://www.ohb.scot.nhs.uk) via the link for Patient Information.

Yours sincerely,

Freedom of Information Officer  
NHS Orkney

Orkney NHS Board Headquarters:  
Garden House, New Scapa Road, Kirkwall, Orkney KW15 1BQ

Chair: John Ross Scott  
Chief Executive: Cathie Cowan  
*Orkney NHS Board is the common name of Orkney Health Board*



HOW TO REDUCE  
THE RISK  
OF DEVELOPING  
DEEP VEIN  
THROMBOSIS  
(DVT - BLOOD  
CLOTS) DURING  
LONG-HAUL  
FLIGHTS

ARE YOU  
**FIT** TO  
**FLY?**

**Scholl** *Softgrip*

**SSL** *International plc*

Toft Hall, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 9PD.  
Tel: 01565 624000

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MILLIONS  
AT RISK  
IN NEW  
LONG-HAUL  
FLIGHT  
SCARE<sup>†</sup>

There is growing evidence that passengers on long-haul flights are at increased risk from developing potentially life-threatening deep vein thrombosis. Indeed, it has been estimated that 30,000 Britons are affected by flight-induced blood clots every year.<sup>†</sup> This leaflet provides the recommended preventative measures that you can take as a passenger when going on a long-haul flight.

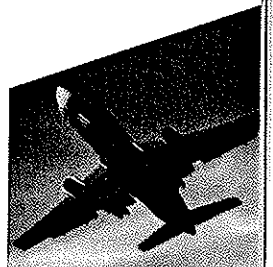
<sup>†</sup> Headline taken from Daily Mail, November 11th 2000.

## WHO IS AT RISK?

Everyone, including those with no previous history of leg swelling.

However, those at **highest risk** include:

- Passengers on flights of four hours or more duration
- People over forty years of age
- People over six feet or under five feet tall
- People with varicose veins
- People with heart disease
- People suffering from cancer
- Those with a history of blood clots
- Those who have recently undergone surgery
- Those who have had recent leg injuries
- Women on the contraceptive pill



## WHAT CAUSES A DEEP VEIN THROMBOSIS (DVT)?

Blood is pumped around your body through arteries but returns to the heart in the veins. The problem is that the blood returning to the heart from the legs has to travel against gravity. This process is assisted by the muscles of the legs acting as a pump, and occurs automatically when you are walking around.

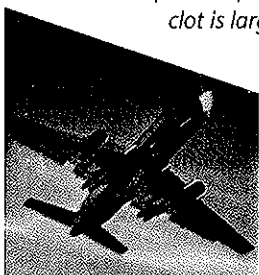
However, when you are not walking, this process is not always as efficient. It's not too bad if you are lying down, but potentially there is a problem if you are sitting in one place for a long period of time and this is what happens on long-haul flights. The blood is at risk of not circulating through your veins adequately and as a result blood could begin to gather in your lower limbs. The result can be swollen ankles, tired, aching legs and in extreme cases, a deep vein thrombosis (DVT) can develop.

## WHAT IS A DEEP VEIN THROMBOSIS?

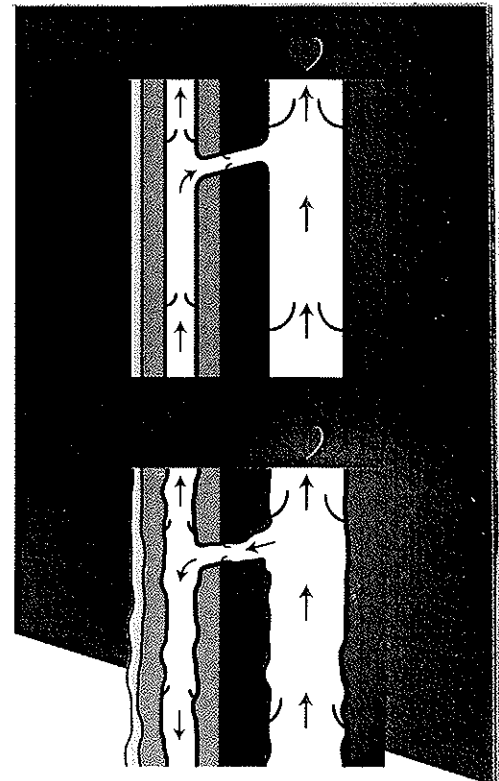
A deep vein thrombosis is a clot of blood that forms in the leg veins. If you have a DVT, you may suffer from a swollen and painful calf or thigh. Other symptoms include an increase in skin temperature and skin discolouration (faint blue-red) at the site of the pain.

DVT is not dangerous in itself, but complications arising from it may occasionally be life threatening. If the clots start to break free from the veins and pass through the blood stream into the lungs (a condition called "pulmonary embolus") you could suffer from pain in the chest, which is worsened by breathing. Pulmonary embolus can also cause shortness of breath and the coughing up of small amounts of blood.

*Most importantly of all, but fortunately rarely, if the blood clot is large enough, it can cause sudden death by travelling to the heart and lungs and interrupting the blood flow.*



In healthy leg veins, valves help prevent backflow as blood is pumped back to the heart.



In damaged leg veins, the valves can fail to keep the blood moving effectively.

## THE PROBLEM WITH FLYING

Long journeys by air are perhaps the only circumstance in which a person is likely to be subjected to sitting still for many hours on end.

Whilst it is true that any long period sat in a cramped position – such as in a train or car, or even at work – can produce similar symptoms, aircraft provide a uniquely hazardous environment.

Because of the seated position, lack of frequent walking exercise and the tendency to become dehydrated there is a remote possibility for blood clots to develop in the legs,<sup>2,3</sup> and a further, even more remote possibility of a pulmonary embolus occurring.

## PREVENTION

It must be stressed, that the risk of developing a deep vein thrombosis or pulmonary embolus during flight is low, but it can occur. The consequences can be extremely serious and therefore prevention is important.

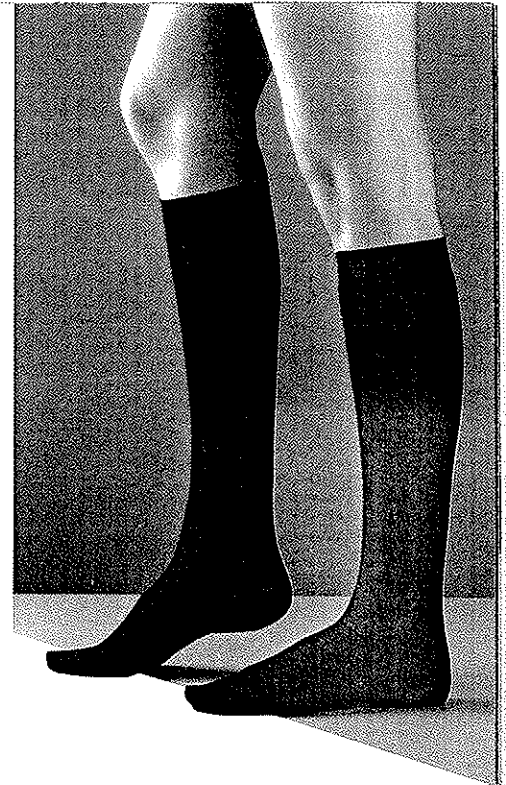
Exercising the legs while seated, getting up and walking around the cabin, drinking water or soft drinks and avoiding excessive tea, coffee or alcohol, are all simple but vital elements in preventing DVT.<sup>1</sup>

## THE VALUE OF COMPRESSION HOSIERY

*Another recommended precaution is the wearing of compression hosiery. Legs tend to swell during flight due to the low cabin pressure and remaining in one position for a long period of time. Compression hosiery can aid the movement of blood in the veins because they are designed to provide extra support that leg veins may need to ensure correct circulation.*

Compression hosiery is often used in hospitals following operations when people are not active. It helps to keep the blood moving whilst people are recovering.

Scholl are the leading name in compression hosiery, and manufacture a range of hosiery that is discreet, comfortable and suitable for men and women of all ages. Scholl Softgrip Class I Ribbed Socks are below the knee in style and can provide easy-to-wear protection in the fight against DVT.

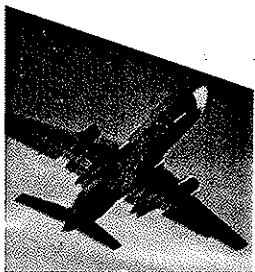


## HOW TO OBTAIN SCHOLL SOFTGRIP CLASS I RIBBED SOCK

Visit your GP or nurse for a prescription, or, see a pharmacist where, following proper measurement, a pair of Scholl Softgrip Class I Ribbed Socks can be purchased.

## CONCLUSION

Long-haul flights can often fill people with apprehension and you might not want the added complication of wearing special hosiery. But with the comfort and protection offered by Scholl Softgrip Class I Ribbed Socks, there is little excuse for not taking that extra bit of care. At the very least, you should enjoy a more comfortable journey.



## RECOMMENDED STEPS TO MINIMISE THE RISK OF DVT IN AIRLINE PASSENGERS

Based on recommendations by the Aviation Health Institute

What can I do to reduce the risks?

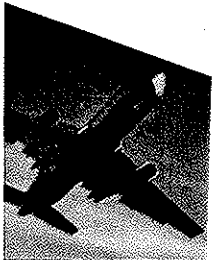
- Exercise your legs (*to simulate walking*), and regularly rotate and flex your shoulders, feet and ankles
- Check the in-flight magazine – it may contain other recommended exercises
- Walk around the cabin as often as possible, at least once an hour
- Breathe deeply at regular intervals to increase oxygen intake
- Keep well hydrated by drinking water and *soft drinks* (drink at least two small glasses of water every hour, or bring a bottle of water on board)
- Avoid excessive amounts of alcohol, tea or coffee
- Avoid sleeping in an uncomfortable position
- Consider wearing compression socks\*
- Only use a footrest if it extends your legs and is padded. Do not use it if it leaves your calves dangling
- Avoid your calves making prolonged contact with your seat.

If you have a history of venous thrombosis

The following preventive measures should be considered (in conjunction with your healthcare professional) for long haul flights:

- Taking 75mg Aspirin to thin the blood (people with stomach disorders, such as ulcers, need to consult their doctor)\*
- Wear compression stockings which cover the foot to above the knee on both legs\*
- An injection of low molecular weight Heparin before flight\* (recommended for elderly, pregnant women, those suffering from obesity or blood disorders and those who have had major surgery)

\*A doctor must be consulted prior to these precautions.



**Blood clots kill one passenger every month**

DAILY MAIL - JANUARY 10 2001

**LONG FLIGHTS 'COST 2000 LIVES A YEAR'**

DAILY TELEGRAPH - JANUARY 10 2001

**Economy Class Syndrome Hits Olympic Trio**

THE TIMES - JANUARY 12 2001

**ONE IN TEN OLDER FLYERS AT RISK FROM BLOOD CLOTS**

THE SUNDAY TIMES - JANUARY 14 2001

**Surgeons back flight fears of blood clots**

THE TIMES - JANUARY 11 2001

**AIRLINES' 30-YEAR SILENCE OVER DVT**

DAILY MAIL - JANUARY 15 2001

If you have had recent surgery or injured a lower limb

- Avoid flying if at all possible.

Further precautions you can take whenever practical

- Prior to leaving for the airport, try to boost your circulation by going for a run, brisk walk or a swim
- Request an aisle seat or a seat with extra leg room
- On a long-haul flight, try to break your journey with an overnight stay en route.



## REMAIN VIGILANT, EVEN WHEN YOUR FLIGHT IS OVER

The risk of DVT doesn't end when the plane lands. Therefore, if any of the following symptoms develop, contact your doctor **immediately** and inform him or her that you were recently on a long-haul flight.

Symptoms to look out for:

- **Severe or persistent** swelling of the ankles
- Swollen and painful calf or thigh
- An increase in skin temperature
- Local skin discolouration.

For further information on the associated risks of long-haul flights, contact the Aviation Health Institute website:

[www.aviation-health.org](http://www.aviation-health.org)



### References

- 1 Aviation Health Institute Advisory Council
- 2 Giangrande P. (1999) Thrombosis and Air Travel, Aviation Health Institute, Oxford.
- 3 Aerospace Medical Association (1997), Medical Guidelines for Airline Travel, Virginia.

