

Long journeys: economy class syndrome

Economy class syndrome is the formation of a blood clot in the veins (**venous thrombosis**) of the legs during journeys lasting more than four hours by plane, car, coach or train.

Long-distance travel carries a slightly increased **risk of venous thrombosis**, especially if you do **not move for hours** on end, **drink too little water** and/or have any **predisposing factors**, such as:

- pregnancy,
- advanced age,
- obesity,
- active cancer,
- coagulation disorders,
- taking oral contraceptives or other oestrogen-based treatments,
- suffering from circulatory problems or serious heart conditions,
- having previously suffered from venous thrombosis or pulmonary embolism,
- having undergone major surgery in the last six weeks (particularly involving the legs, abdomen or pelvic region) or
- having a leg in a plaster cast.

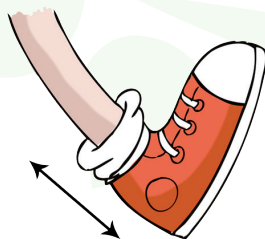
What symptoms does it cause?

It begins with **swelling of the foot or ankle**. Other symptoms may then develop, such as pain in the calf, redness and/or increased temperature in the leg.

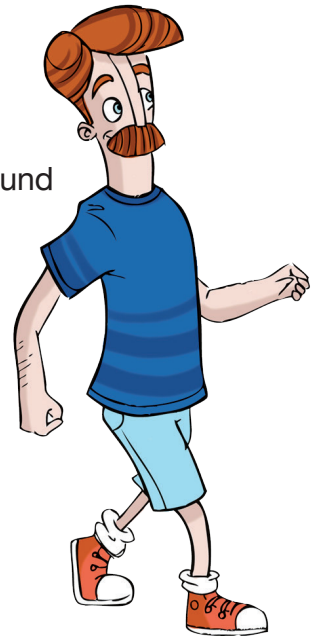
Symptoms often appear **after you have reached your destination**, up to two weeks later.

How can I prevent it?

- During the journey, do heel-to-toe movements whilst sitting in your seat.



- Walk whenever you are allowed to.
- Go to the toilet every 2 hours.
- After the journey, walk around to get your circulation going.
- Do not place any luggage where it prevents you from stretching your legs.
- Do not cross your legs.
- Do not wear clothing that is too tight around your legs or waist.
- Avoid sedatives and alcoholic drinks.
- Drink plenty of water.



If you have a history of thrombosis or are at moderate to high risk, your doctor may prescribe below-the-knee compression stockings and/or heparin.

If you are already taking anticoagulants, no further measures are necessary.

Could I experience any complications?

The most serious complication occurs when a blood clot in a vein travels to the lungs and causes a pulmonary embolism.

This is suspected if you suddenly experience shortness of breath, chest pain, cough up blood or your blood pressure drops.

What should I do if I suspect I have a venous thrombosis or a pulmonary embolism?

You must be assessed urgently by a healthcare professional to confirm the diagnosis and start treatment as soon as possible.