



## New 2018 ASH Clinical Practice Guidelines on Venous Thromboembolism:

# What You Should Know

The American Society of Hematology (ASH) has long recognized the need for a comprehensive set of guidelines for hematologists and other clinicians on the treatment of venous thromboembolism (VTE), a common and serious blood clotting condition that includes both deep-vein thrombosis (DVT) and pulmonary embolism (PE).

In partnership with the McMaster University GRADE Centre, a world leader in guideline development and an authority on thrombosis, ASH brought together more than 100 experts including hematologists, clinicians, specialists, and patient representatives to synthesize the research and develop new clinical practice guidelines for VTE.

What follows is a high-level summary of the first six chapters of the 2018 ASH Clinical Practice Guidelines for Venous Thromboembolism, with four additional chapters forthcoming.

For more information on the 2018 ASH Clinical Practice Guidelines on Venous Thromboembolism, visit [www.hematology.org/VTE](http://www.hematology.org/VTE).





# Prophylaxis for Hospitalized and Non-Hospitalized Medical Patients



## What it covers

- Who should receive an intervention and what that intervention should be
- Interventions considered include blood thinning medications of different types and mechanical compression (e.g., pneumatic compression devices or graduated compression stockings).



## Why it matters

- Medical inpatients, long-term care residents, persons with minor injuries, and long-distance travelers are at increased risk of VTE, which can be fatal (20-25% of all VTE instances occur in these groups).
- It is important to ensure that at-risk patients receive the appropriate measures to prevent VTE without excess bleeding side effects.
- The guidelines recommend the best approaches for preventing VTE in these populations while minimizing unnecessary or over-treatment.



## Who it affects

- Medical inpatients (including those in intensive care units), long-term care residents, persons with minor injuries, and long-distance travelers (>4 hours by air)
- Health care providers working in hospitals



## What are the highlights

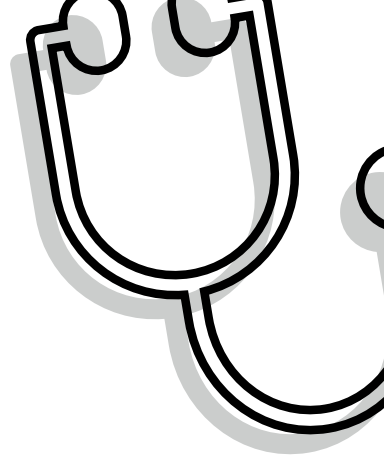
- For patients who are hospitalized, risk assessment for VTE and bleeding help inform a decision on effective prophylactic measures.
- In medical inpatients at high bleeding risk who require prophylaxis, mechanical prophylaxis is preferred over blood-thinning medications.
- In medical inpatients at high VTE risk but acceptable bleeding risk, blood thinning medication is preferred over mechanical prophylaxis.
- In medical inpatients, when medication is used to prevent VTE, low-molecular-weight heparin is preferred over unfractionated heparin because it is only administered once a day and has fewer complications.
- In medical inpatients, when a medication is used to prevent VTE, low-molecular-weight heparin during the hospital stay is preferred over a direct oral anticoagulant administered in hospital or after discharge.
- The use of combined modalities in medical inpatients (e.g., compression devices plus a blood thinner) is not necessary.
- Long-distance air travelers who do not have an elevated risk of thrombosis do not need to wear compression socks or take a blood thinner like aspirin to prevent thrombosis. Air travelers at substantially increased risk may benefit from graduated compression stockings or low-molecular-weight heparin.

**Total number of panel recommendations: 21**

For more information on the 2018 ASH Clinical Practice Guidelines on Venous Thromboembolism, visit [www.hematology.org/VTE](http://www.hematology.org/VTE).

The American Society of Hematology (ASH) ([www.hematology.org](http://www.hematology.org)) is the world's largest professional society of hematologists dedicated to furthering the understanding, diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of disorders affecting the blood. For more than 50 years, the Society has led the development of hematology as a discipline by promoting research, patient care, education, training, and advocacy in hematology.





## Diagnosis of VTE



### What it covers

- Efficient diagnostic strategies for evaluating patients with suspected VTE to provide accurate diagnosis and reduce the number of patients undergoing unnecessary and more invasive testing



### Why it matters

- Accurate diagnosis of VTE is important due to the morbidity and mortality associated with missed diagnoses and the potential side effects, patient inconvenience, and resource implications of anticoagulant treatment given for VTE.
- While a number of patients are initially suspected of having blood clots, many of them do not.
- For patients at low likelihood of having VTE, it is important to rule out VTE without subjecting patients to unnecessary tests.



### Who it affects

- Patients with suspected VTE
- Clinicians and health care professionals



### What are the highlights

- These recommendations confirm previous guidelines through a rigorous review of existing evidence.
- Unlike other VTE diagnosis guidelines, mathematical modelling was done to predict outcomes of various diagnostic pathways that have not been previously evaluated.
- Before considering a test, categorizing patients into the likelihood that they have VTE will help achieve an accurate diagnosis without exposing the patient to unnecessary testing.
- A D-dimer test is the best first step to check for VTE in patients with low pre-test probability; if results are negative, no further testing is required.
- When possible, clinicians should use a VQ scan, which exposes patients to lower radiation risk, versus a CT scan. Older individuals or those with preexisting lung disease are not ideal candidates for a VQ scan.

**Total number of panel recommendations: 10**

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# Optimal Management of Anticoagulation Therapy



## What it covers

- Optimal care management of anticoagulation therapy in patients who have previously experienced a clot



## Why it matters

- Anticoagulant drugs must be used with skill in order to reduce risks of bleeding and developing another clot.
- Health care providers often have to make the difficult decision to continue or stop anticoagulation therapy following a major bleeding event.



## Who it affects

- Patients who have already had a blood clot and need to take anticoagulant drugs
- Pharmacists, clinicians, nurses, and health care policy makers



## What are the highlights

- Managing anticoagulation therapy is complex. Patients should receive care from specialized anticoagulation management service centers versus primary care physicians whenever possible.
- Most patients needing to interrupt warfarin for invasive procedures do not require a short-acting injectable anticoagulant administered during the peri-operative period, so-called bridge therapy.
- Management of life-threatening bleeding during anticoagulant therapy requires thoughtful use of anticoagulant reversal therapies.
- Many patients who survive major bleeding during anticoagulant therapy should resume taking anticoagulants.

**Total number of panel recommendations: 25**

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# Heparin-Induced Thrombocytopenia



## What it covers

- A rare and serious adverse drug reaction that increases a patient's risk of developing venous or arterial thromboembolism, which may be limb- or life-threatening



## Why it matters

- Suspected heparin-induced thrombocytopenia (HIT) cases in hospitalized patients is the most frequently requested hematologist consult by other physicians.
- HIT can lead to amputation or death – for every day treatment is delayed, there is a ~6% risk of new thrombosis, amputation, and death.
- HIT is frequently misdiagnosed and over diagnosed.
- 12 million U.S. patients receive heparin each year, up to 1% of whom will develop HIT.



## Who it affects

- Surgical patients most commonly, especially those undergoing cardiac surgery
- Hospitalists, surgeons, and cardiologists



## What are the highlights

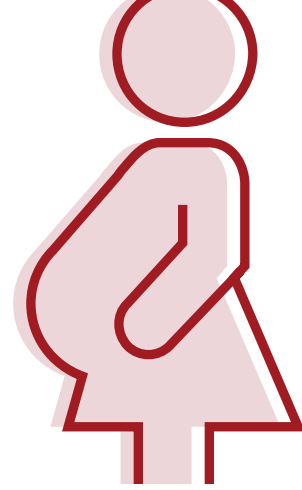
- Using a clinical scoring system, the 4Ts score, rather than a gestalt approach will improve the accuracy of diagnosis and patient outcomes.
- Treatment options include not only conventional agents such as argatroban, bivalirudin, and danaparoid, but also newer agents such as fondaparinux and the direct oral anticoagulants.

**Total number of panel recommendations: 32**

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## VTE in the Context of Pregnancy



### What it covers

- The diagnosis, prevention, and treatment of VTE during and after pregnancy, which are particularly challenging issues due to the need to consider fetal as well as maternal well-being



### Why it matters

- Pregnancy-associated VTE is a leading cause of maternal morbidity and mortality in Western countries.
- Factors such as prior VTE, inherited clotting disorders, increasing age, cesarean delivery, co-existent diseases (e.g., sickle cell disease, lupus), and obesity also increase risk.
- Pregnant women are more likely to be older, overweight, have additional medical conditions, and undergo a cesarean delivery than in the past.



### Who it affects

- Pregnant women, especially those who have previously experienced a blood clot or have other risk factors for blood clots
- Obstetrician-gynecologists, maternal fetal specialists, and internists



### What are the highlights

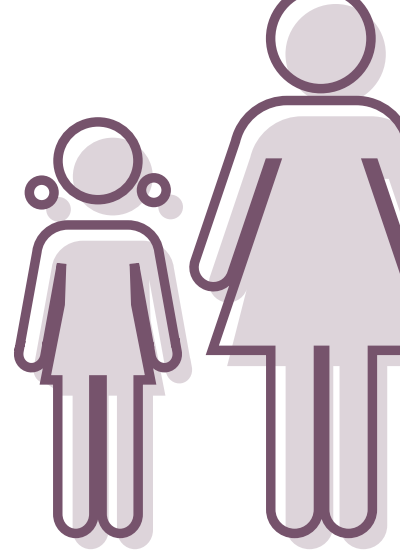
- A conservative approach to prescribing prophylaxis, in which prophylaxis is given only to those patients for whom the available research suggests benefit, is key to minimize potential harm from over treatment.
- In the majority of cases, low-molecular-weight heparin is likely to be the best approach for managing superficial thrombosis.
- For treatment of pulmonary embolism and deep-vein thrombosis with low-molecular-weight heparin, it is acceptable to do weight-based dosing instead of using regular blood tests to adjust the dose.
- A majority of pregnant women with newly diagnosed VTE at low risk of complications can be treated as outpatients, rather than admitted to hospital, as long as the right supports are in place.

**Total number of panel recommendations: 31**

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## Treatment of Pediatric VTE



### What it covers

- Treating VTE in pediatric patients



### Why it matters

- The incidence of VTE in children at a population level is very low, but it is higher in hospitalized children (in fact, hospital acquired VTE is said to be the second most common cause of preventable harm in hospitalized children – behind infection).
- VTE treatment and complications are different for children spanning a wide age range.
- Children are one of the most challenging patient populations to treat because VTE always occurs in the context of another serious diagnosis that also must be treated.
- Research in pediatric VTE is very limited.
- Much of the existing evidence is extrapolated from adult practice.



### Who it affects

- Very ill children, newborns through 18 years of age; most common in small children and teenagers
- Pediatricians, pediatric hematologists, pediatric oncologists, pediatric intensivists, and neonatologists



### What are the highlights

- Sometimes DVT causes symptoms, and sometimes it is found incidentally in an imaging study for something else. These guidelines inform how to treat these different situations. This distinction has not been addressed by guidelines in the past.
- Central venous line-associated clots are the most common clots in children.
- If the central venous line is not working and the child is at the end of treatment, it should most likely be removed.
- Renal vein thrombosis, the most common spontaneous VTE in children, should all receive anticoagulation therapy.
- Due to the low level of existing evidence, additional research is required to develop more evidence-based care recommendations.

**Total number of panel recommendations: 30**

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