

GUIDELINES

European guidelines on peri-operative venous thromboembolism prophylaxis: first update.

Chapter 13: Nonambulatory orthopaedic surgery

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European Journal of Anaesthesiology 2024, 41:622–626

Rationale

Venous thrombo-embolic events (VTE) are a classic complication of orthopaedic and trauma surgery. Traditionally, their prevention has been based on the routine prescription of potent anticoagulants. More recently, the recognition of the iatrogenic complications of anticoagulant therapy, the advent of rapid recovery or fast-track procedures, and the consequent assumption of reduced risk of postoperative VTE, have led to a more general reflection on the benefit/risk balance of prophylaxis through anticoagulant treatment.

Patient-related VTE risk factors include (but are not limited to):

- previous or family history of venous thromboembolism^{1,2}
- major thrombophilia³
- age >70 years⁴
- obesity⁵
- hypoalbuminaemia⁶
- active cancer⁷
- oestrogenic oral contraception and oral hormone therapy for the menopause⁸
- renal insufficiency⁹

Risk factors for VTE associated with surgery include (but are not limited to):

- surgery on the lower limb, especially pelvic, hip, knee¹⁰
- long duration of surgery¹¹

- cast immobilisation¹²
- allogenic blood transfusion¹³
- use of tourniquet¹⁴

Patient-related bleeding risk factors include (but are not limited to):

- coagulopathy¹⁵
- anticoagulant medication¹⁶

Bleeding risk factors related to the procedure performed are (but are not limited to):

- duration of procedure¹⁷
- length of skin incision¹⁸
- use of drains¹⁹

The prescription of prophylactic treatment must be based on a synthesis of these different elements. Prescription must be tailored for each patient and each procedure, and no universal approach can be proposed.

Fast-track procedures aim to reduce the duration of a hospital stay by delivering optimised patient-centred care to achieve a pain and risk-free surgery.²⁰ These pathways reduce the risk of postoperative VTE in orthopaedics²¹ and should be used routinely as there are no real contraindications, particularly to early resumption of walking, which is probably the major factor preventing VTE.^{22,23}

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DOI:10.1097/EJA.0000000000002020

Procedures such as hip or knee arthroscopy, foot surgery or upper limb surgery (a non-exhaustive list) carry a low risk of postoperative VTE.^{12,24–26} The risk of iatrogenic bleeding with anticoagulants may be higher. It therefore seems logical to reserve the prescription of anticoagulants for patients at high risk of VTE without a high personal risk of bleeding.

Numerous articles have demonstrated the impact of pharmacological prophylaxis in orthopaedic surgery, particularly after pelvic, hip and knee surgery. In general, however, the literature does not allow us to decide which molecule is the most appropriate. Total hip arthroplasty (THA), total knee arthroplasty (TKA) and hip fractures are the most well documented procedures. Pharmacological prophylaxis is the most well documented form, and probably the most effective, at the cost of a higher risk of bleeding that can lead to periprosthetic infection. An increasing number of articles suggest that aspirin is an interesting alternative for THA and TKA, particularly in fast-track procedures. However, aspirin is not currently validated after hip fracture. The most recent literature does not show any superiority of any drug or any protocol for VTE prevention after orthopaedic and trauma surgery,^{27–49} even if some reports come to different conclusions.^{50–53} No screening tool is widely used and accepted after orthopaedic surgery.⁵⁴

The advantage of mechanical prophylaxis is its safety, but its actual efficacy is open to debate.^{55–62} It may be useful as an adjuvant treatment, particularly when the risk of bleeding with anticoagulants is high.

Recommendations

- Foreword 1: The term ‘Non-ambulatory orthopaedic surgery’ refers to patients remaining in hospital for at least one night post-surgery, without defining the total length of stay. This term does not define the type of postoperative rehabilitation, which may or may not include a fast-track procedure. The risk of VTE increases with the length of stay, whereas fast-track procedures are presumed to reduce this risk. It is therefore not possible to define unique recommendations.
- Foreword 2: The term ‘pharmacological VTE prophylaxis’ includes (by alphabetic order) aspirin, coumarin, direct oral anticoagulants (DOAC), low molecular weight heparins (LMWH) and unfractionated heparin (UFH) in the case of renal failure. The term ‘mechanical prophylaxis’ included (by alphabetical order) fast-track procedures, graduate compression stockings and intermittent pneumatic compression.
- Foreword 3: There no generally accepted classification for low or high VTE risk surgery and low or high risk of bleeding. These points should be assessed with a surgery- and patient-specific policy (Supplementary Table 1, <http://links.lww.com/EJA/A981>)

Preoperative period

- (1) We suggest routine patient-specific rather than population-based preoperative evaluation of the risk of VTE and bleeding according to the type of procedure and the planned postoperative course (fast-track or standard postoperative procedure) (Grade 2B)

Postoperative period

- (1) We recommend routine fast-track procedures including early ambulation and joint mobilisation over timing of procedures based on convenience (Grade 1B).
- (2) Low VTE risk surgery
 - (a) No patient-related risk factor: We suggest no pharmacological VTE prophylaxis for procedures with low VTE risk for a patient without high personal risk of VTE (Grade 2B).
 - (b) Additional patient-related risk factor for VTE:
 - (i) No high risk of bleeding: We suggest pharmacological VTE prophylaxis with either LMWH or DOAC over no VTE prophylaxis for procedures with low VTE risk for a patient with high personal risk of VTE (Grade 2B). We are unable to make a recommendation for or against the use of aspirin.
 - (ii) High risk of bleeding: We suggest mechanical prophylaxis over no VTE prophylaxis for procedures with low VTE risk for a patient with high personal risk of VTE (Grade 2C).
- (3) High VTE risk surgery:
 - (a) No high risk of bleeding: We suggest VTE prophylaxis with either LMWH or DOAC rather than no VTE prophylaxis for procedures with high VTE risk without high risk of bleeding (Grade 2B). We are unable to make a recommendation for or against the use of aspirin.
 - (b) High risk of bleeding: We suggest mechanical VTE prophylaxis rather than pharmacological prophylaxis for procedures with high VTE risk with high risk of bleeding (Grade 2C).
- (4) Specific procedures
 - (a) We recommend pharmacological VTE prophylaxis rather than no prophylaxis after THA, TKA and hip fractures (Grade 1A).
 - (b) We recommend pharmacological VTE prophylaxis with either LMWH or DOAC rather than no prophylaxis after fast-track THA, TKA or hip fracture (Grade 1B).
 - (c) We recommend pharmacological VTE prophylaxis with aspirin rather than no prophylaxis after fast-track THA and TKA (Grade 1C).

- (d) We recommend pharmacological VTE prophylaxis with either LMWH or DOAC rather than no prophylaxis after THA, TKA and hip fractures (Grade 1A)
- (e) We recommend pharmacological VTE prophylaxis with LMWH (Grade 1B), DOAC (Grade 1B) or aspirin (Grade 1C) rather than no prophylaxis after fast-track THA or TKA.

Acknowledgements relating to this article

Assistance with Editorial: none.

Financial Support and sponsorship: the work was funded by ESAIC, EACTAIC, EACTS, ISTH, EURAPS and EKS.

Conflict of interests: J-YJ: Stock shareholder: Lynckx, Other support: B-Braun, United Orthopedics, Heraeus; SL: Receipt of honoraria or consultation fees: Baxter, CSL Behring, Norgine, Werfen; AG: Receipt of honoraria or consultation fees: Aguetant, Bayer Healthcare, BMS-Pfizer, Boehringer Ingelheim, Sanofi, CSL Behring, LFB, Octapharma, Stago; JE: Receipt of grants/research supports: Anthos, Bayer, BI, BMS, Daiichi-Sankyo, Ionis, Janssen, Merck, Pfizer, USV; Receipt of honoraria or consultation fees: Anthos, Bayer, BI, BMS, Daiichi-Sankyo, Ionis, Janssen, Merck, Pfizer, USV

Presentation: none.

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GRAPHICAL ABSTRACT

EUROPEAN GUIDELINES ON PERIOPERATIVE VENOUS THROMBOEMBOLISM PROPHYLAXIS
FIRST UPDATE
Non-ambulatory orthopaedic surgery



Preoperative

Pre-operative evaluation of the risk of VTE and bleeding according to the type of procedure and the planned post-operative course (fast-track or standard post-operative procedure) *Grade 2B*

Postoperative

Routine fast-track procedures (including early ambulation and joint mobilization) over timing of procedures based on convenience *Grade 1B*

	LOW THROMBOSIS RISK		HIGH THROMBOSIS RISK	
	LOW BLEEDING RISK	HIGH BLEEDING RISK	LOW BLEEDING RISK	HIGH BLEEDING RISK
No patient-related risk factors	No pharmacological prophylaxis (2B)		Pharmacological prophylaxis with LMWH or DOACs over no VTE prophylaxis (2B)	Mechanical VTE prophylaxis over pharmacological prophylaxis (2C)
Patient-related risk factors	Pharmacological prophylaxis with LMWH or DOACs over no prophylaxis (2B)	Mechanical prophylaxis over no VTE prophylaxis (2B)	Pharmacological prophylaxis with LMWH or DOACs over no VTE prophylaxis (2B)	Mechanical VTE prophylaxis over pharmacological prophylaxis (2C)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Previous or family history of venous thromboembolism Major thrombophilia Age > 70 years Obesity Hypalbuminemia Active cancer Estrogenic oral contraception and oral hormone therapy for menopause Renal insufficiency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Surgery on the lower limb <ul style="list-style-type: none"> pelvic, hip, knee Long duration surgery Cast immobilization Allogenic blood transfusion Use of tourniquet
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THA
TKA
Hip fractures

Pharmacological prophylaxis over no prophylaxis *Grade 1A*

LMWH or DOACs over no prophylaxis *Grade 1A*

Fast-track THA, TKA, hip fracture

Pharmacological VTE prophylaxis with either

LMWH	<i>Grade 1B</i>
DOACs	<i>Grade 1B</i>
Aspirin	<i>Grade 1C</i>

over no prophylaxis

THA: Total Hip Arthroplasty
TKA: Total Knee Arthroplasty



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