

Essential thrombocythaemia (ET)

Essential thrombocythaemia (ET) is a rare, slow-growing blood cancer. It happens when your bone marrow makes too many platelets. This can cause blood clots. ET belongs to a group of conditions called myeloproliferative neoplasms (MPNs).

We do not know the exact cause of ET. It is not due to something you did or did not do.

Symptoms of ET

Some people have a blood clot or bleeding as a first sign that something is wrong. But you may not have any symptoms of ET when you are first diagnosed.

You may get signs and symptoms of ET over time. These may include:



Extreme tiredness



Numbness or pins and needles



Headaches



Bruising



Dizziness

ET can cause blood clots. These can be life-threatening, although this is rare.

You may get:

- Tiny clots in the veins under your skin, often in your legs
- Serious clots anywhere in your body, including your brain, heart or tummy

Your haematology team will tell you what to look out for and when to seek help.

ET is diagnosed from blood tests, bone marrow tests, and genetic tests.

Treatment for ET

If you don't need treatment straight away, you'll be on 'active monitoring'. This means you'll have regular check-ups with your haematology team and monitor your symptoms. You'll start treatment if and when you need it.

If you need treatment, you may have:

- Medicines to prevent blood clots, like daily low-dose aspirin.
- Medicine to lower your platelet counts. This may be chemotherapy tablets that you take at home, injections or other medicines you take by mouth.

You can also have supportive treatments to prevent or manage other problems that may develop from ET or from treatment. You'll have regular check-ups to see how your ET is responding to treatment and how you're coping.

You can help yourself too by making lifestyle changes to support your heart health and to lower your risk of blood clots. These include:

- Not smoking
- Maintaining a healthy weight
- Eating a healthy diet
- Exercising
- Having cholesterol, blood sugar and blood pressure tests

Sometimes, ET can progress into a different blood cancer. It may transform into another type of MPN or into acute myeloid leukaemia (AML). If this happens, your symptoms may change, and you will need different treatment.

This information is aimed at people in the UK. We do our best to make sure it is accurate and up to date but it should not replace advice or guidance from your health professional.

For [more information about ET](#), follow the link or scan the QR code. Or search 'essential thrombocythaemia' at www.leukaemiacare.org.uk.

This also includes links to order free information in print.



Need help? We offer a range of [support services](#). To find out more, scan the QR code, click the link or search 'support for you' at leukaemiacare.org.uk



Want to talk about ET?

- Call our freephone helpline on **08088 010 444** (weekdays 9am to 4.30pm)
- Send a WhatsApp to **07500 068065** (weekdays 9am to 5pm)
- Visit www.leukaemiacare.org.uk
- Email support@leukaemiacare.org.uk

If you have any feedback or you'd like a list of the sources we used for this factsheet, please get in touch. Email information@leukaemiacare.org.uk or call **08088 010 444**. Or complete our [short survey](#) to let us know what we can improve.

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