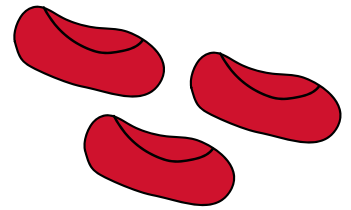


### What is PV?

Polycythaemia vera (PV) is a rare, slow-growing blood cancer. It happens when your bone marrow makes too many red blood cells. This makes your blood thicker than usual. This can cause blood clots to form.



Red blood cells

We do not know the exact cause of PV. It is not usually inherited, and you cannot usually pass it on to any children you may have.

PV is usually diagnosed using blood tests and bone marrow tests.

Around half of people with PV do not have symptoms when they are diagnosed. But you might get signs and symptoms over time, which could include:



Blood clots



Easy bruising and bleeding



Swollen spleen



Fatigue



Itching

### Blood clots

Symptoms of blood clots depend on where they are. They include:

- **Heart:** chest pain, breathlessness or discomfort in your back, arm, shoulder or neck
- **Brain:** drooping of your face on one side, slurred or garbled speech or difficulty keeping both arms raised
- **Lung:** chest pain, sudden breathlessness or coughing up blood
- **Arm or leg:** painful, red, hot or swollen arm or leg
- **Eye:** blurred vision or loss of vision

### How is PV treated?

PV treatment focuses on managing your symptoms and preventing blood clots. Treatment options include:

- Venesection – a simple procedure to remove some of your blood and keep your blood counts stable.
- Aspirin to reduce your risk of blood clots.
- Medicines to lower your blood counts if you have a high risk of blood clots. This could be chemotherapy tablets, injections or targeted medicines.
- Treatment to relieve symptoms such as itching.



Your haematology team should tell you what they recommend and what you can expect from treatment.

You can also make some lifestyle changes to help reduce your risk of blood clots. These include:



Not smoking



Maintaining a healthy weight



Eating a healthy diet



Exercising



Having cholesterol and blood sugar tests



Getting your blood pressure checked

Sometimes, PV can transform into a faster-growing type of blood cancer. If this happens, you will need different treatment.

Outcomes of PV vary from person to person. But people with PV who do not develop another type of cancer usually have excellent outcomes, and only a slightly reduced life expectancy.

For [more information about PV](#), follow the link, search 'PV' at [www.leukaemiacare.org.uk](http://www.leukaemiacare.org.uk) or scan the QR code. This also includes information on ordering free booklets via our online shop.



[We're here for you if you need support. Scan the QR code, click the link or search 'support for you' at \[leukaemiacare.org.uk\]\(http://leukaemiacare.org.uk\) to find out what we offer.](#)



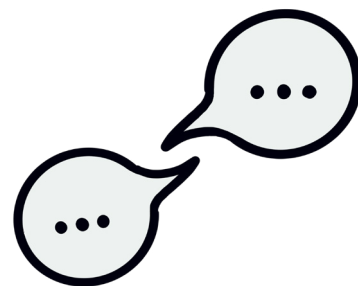
## Want to talk?

Call our freephone helpline on **08088 010 444**  
(free from landlines and all major mobile networks)

Message us on WhatsApp at **07500 068065**

[www.leukaemiacare.org.uk](http://www.leukaemiacare.org.uk)

[support@leukaemiacare.org.uk](mailto:support@leukaemiacare.org.uk)



If you have any feedback, or you'd like a list of the references we used to create this factsheet, please email [information@leukaemiacare.org.uk](mailto:information@leukaemiacare.org.uk), complete our [short survey](#) or call **01905 755977**.