



# PINE BARK PILL THAT BEATS DVT

**A** PILL made from pine bark can provide a safe way to protect travellers from potentially fatal DVT.

Only patients diagnosed as at risks of deep vein thrombosis can get anti-clotting drugs for use during travel. The alternative has been to take aspirin before flying.

However, aspirin can cause stomach bleeding and also prevent wounds from healing.

But Pycnogenol — made from the bark of pine trees found on the south-west coast of France — has been found to be as effective as aspirin without the risk of intestinal bleeding.

Several chemicals in the bark are high in anti-oxidants, which are known to prevent blood platelets forming clots that cause DVTs.

Dr Ronald Watson, of the University of Arizona Medical School, carried out trials with smokers, who are at increased risk of DVT. He said pine bark pills thinned their blood back to what it had been prior to them lighting up for the trial.

He says: 'You won't find many doctors advocating the casual use of aspirin now. The risk of bleeding is relatively high in relation to the risk of having a clot.'

'Substances like pine bark are safer and just as efficient, it would seem, as aspirin or, possibly, the prescription drugs used for people with a diagnosed risk of DVT.'



## CASE HISTORY

LAURA THOMAS, 27, who is married with a 20-month-old daughter, started taking Pycnogenol recently in preparation for a 10-hour flight to Florida for a family holiday. Laura (pictured) and her husband Mark, 33, from Worthing, West Sussex, went on a 24-hour flight to China for their honeymoon four years ago. She says: 'At the time DVT was hardly known and so we took no precautions. We were cramped up in our seats for hours on end.'

'I now know that I am at increased risk because I am on the Pill. And into the bargain I have developed high blood pressure since the birth of my child. So taking something to lower the risk makes sense.'

Once it was thought DVT affected only long-distance travellers in economy class. But a recent study of flights between Stansted and Italy found that clots can develop in the first two to three hours of a flight — putting most people at risk. Clots were found in 4.3 per cent of the high-risk flyers.

Separate research by the Aviation Health Institute found that, out of the 85 DVT related deaths in the past three years, one in five occurred after a short-haul flight.

Those at increased risk of DVTs include people with health problems such as heart disease and pregnant women.

Passengers going on short or long-haul flights should drink plenty of water, try to exercise their legs during the flight at regular intervals, and refrain from alcohol or coffee.

■ **PYCNOGENOL** pills can be bought at Holland and Barrett or can be ordered direct on 0870 6066605 or by going to [www.hollandandbarrett.com](http://www.hollandandbarrett.com)

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