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Woman, 80, gets new blood clot prevention device

A woman has undergone a new procedure that could prevent thousands dying from blood clots after surgery.

Doreen Carter, 80 and from Wokingham, is thought to be the first in the world to have the device fitted, doctors say.

The "titanium filter", designed to reduce the risk of pulmonary embolisms, was inserted near her heart at Royal Berkshire Hospital in Reading.

It takes 15 minutes to insert and can be retracted. Existing filters take longer and often cannot be removed.

Mrs Carter, who had a major bowel operation on Thursday, said it was "a privilege" to be the first patient to undergo the procedure.

"I'm quite happy everyone knows what they're doing and I just let them get on with it," the grandmother-of-three said.

Easier option

Dr Carl Waldmann, a consultant at the hospital, said giving post-operative patients anti-clotting drugs can be risky, and existing measures to catch clots also carry risks because they are difficult to insert and remove.

He said the new device, a titanium wire inside an 18-inch-long (46cm) tube, offers doctors "another option".

"This is something we can put in for a limited number of days and easily take out," he said.

Pulmonary embolisms - blood clots which reach the lungs - kill an estimated 25,000 people a year in the UK, Dr Waldmann said.

The new titanium filter is inserted into the inferior vena cava, a major vein which carries blood to the heart.

Once in the vein, a wire mesh on the device called a cage is opened, allowing blood to flow through but catching any clots before they travel to the lungs.

Royal Berkshire Hospital is the first of six UK hospitals to test the device.
