

How To Prevent Deep Vein Thrombosis

General Information

Deep vein thrombosis (DVT) is a blood clotting condition. A clot forms in one of the deep veins surrounded by muscle in the center of your arm or leg.

The clot may break off and travel through the bloodstream. As a result, the clot may lodge in the brain, lungs, heart or other area causing severe damage.

Causes of DVT

Causes of DVT include:

- long periods of inactivity that decrease blood flow and increase the risk of developing blood clots. This inactivity can be caused by recovering after surgery or an injury, or by traveling.
- birth control pills (estrogen)
- a previous episode of DVT
- being born with blood-clotting problems.

Symptoms of DVT

Symptoms of DVT include:

- pain in one leg only
- sudden arm or leg swelling
- enlarged veins near the surface of the skin
- reddish-blue skin
- warm skin at the site.

Treating DVT

DVT needs to be treated to prevent another deep vein thrombosis clot from forming.

The most common treatment is medicine to keep the blood from clotting, such as warfarin (Jantoven[®]) and heparin.

Most DVTs disappear without problems, but you are at an increased risk of getting another clot.

Preventing DVT

It is best to prevent DVT instead of treating it once you have it. To decrease your risk of DVT, use the following tips.

- Do not smoke. Smoking can cause blood to thicken and form clots.
- Drink plenty of water to stay hydrated.
- Get enough activity.
- If you are on bedrest or traveling long distances you can do the following.
 - Change positions often.
 - Avoid drinking alcohol before or during travel.
 - Do easy exercises to get the blood moving through your body:
 - tense and release your muscles
 - rotate your ankles in circles
 - point your toes toward and away from your head
 - lift your knees off your seat.

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- Take walks when possible.
- Wear elastic compression stockings while traveling or while in bed.

If you are not able to be out of bed and move, or if you are at high risk for DVT, talk with your health care provider. You may be able to take anticoagulant medicine while you are at risk.

**Information adapted from the
National Institutes of Health.**