

Am I at increased risk of blood clots?

If you have any of the following risk factors, speak with your doctor or nurse.

- ◇ A **trauma** or **injury**: particularly to your legs
- ◇ **Hospitalization stay/bed confinement**: you have been confined to bed for at least 3 days, or are unable to walk without help, or spend a large part of the day in bed or in a chair
- ◇ **History of blood clots**: either you or a close relative have had a previous blood clot
- ◇ **Age**: you are over the age of 60, particularly if your mobility is poor
- ◇ **Blood disorders**
- ◇ **Long term medical conditions**: such as diabetes, heart or lung problems
- ◇ You are taking **Birth control pills** or **hormone therapy**

Am I at increased risk of bleeding?

Blood thinner drugs are well tolerated. One of the common side effects is bleeding. If bleeding occurs, it can be managed by a physician.

If any of the following applies to you, please tell your doctor :

- ◇ You are taking **blood thinner medication**
- ◇ You have a **known bleeding disorder**
- ◇ You have a **low platelet count**
- ◇ You have a **past history** of major bleeding or a bleeding ulcer
- ◇ You have a **family history** of major bleeding
- ◇ You have had a **stroke** recently
- ◇ You have a very **high blood pressure**
- ◇ You have **severe liver or kidney disease**

Your health is your responsibility. Tell your doctor if you have any of these risks.

safer healthcare
now!



Preventing blood clots

Information for patients, relatives and caregivers

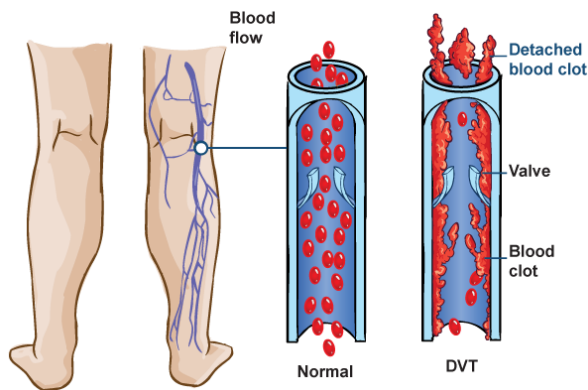


Central
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What are blood clots?

Normally, blood flows easily through your blood vessels. However, if a blood vessel becomes damaged or if the flow slows down or stops, the blood can clot and form a 'plug'.

Blood clots sometimes form in your deep veins usually in the lower leg. This clot is called deep vein thrombosis or DVT for short. Sometimes pain in the leg is the only sign and often there are no signs at all. This clot may break off of the vein in the leg and move to the lung. This is called a pulmonary embolism, or PE for short.



When you are at the hospital

There are a number of steps your Healthcare Team can take to help reduce your risk of getting a blood clot. They will make sure you have enough fluids so that you do not become dehydrated. They will also encourage you to move around as soon as you are able.

If you are at risk, your healthcare team may discuss therapy to help prevent blood clots. They may also ask you to continue the therapy at home.

Depending on your risks, you may be offered:

- ◇ A drug known as a blood thinner that helps stop blood clots from forming
- ◇ Special stockings to help keep the blood in your legs circulating

If you are given stockings to wear, you must not roll them down and they must be worn at all times except when bathing.

Blood clot prevention starts with you.

Know your risks for a blood clot and share them with your Healthcare team.

Are there any signs I should look out for?

There are certain signs to look out for that may mean you have a blood clot. You should seek help immediately if you have any of the following in the days or weeks after your treatment, especially after being discharged from the hospital.

Symptoms of a DVT:

- ◇ Pain or swelling in your leg or calf
- ◇ The skin on your leg feels warm or is discolored (red, purple or blue)
- ◇ The veins near the surface of your legs appear larger than normal or you notice them more

Symptoms of a PE:

- ◇ Sudden breathlessness or shortness of breath that cannot be explained
- ◇ Sudden sharp pain in your chest or upper back
- ◇ Light-headedness or coughing up blood (does not always occur)