

# Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT)

Deep Vein Thrombosis, also called DVT, is a blood clot that forms inside a vein in the body. It most often occurs in the legs. The blood clot may block part or all of the blood flow. It may also break loose and cause a serious problem in the lung or a heart attack or stroke. Learn how to prevent DVT and know its signs.

## Risk Factors

You are at greater risk for DVT if you:

- Have heart disease
- Are pregnant
- Are overweight
- Have anemia
- Have liver disease
- Are inactive or have long periods in bed
- Have trauma injuries or fractures
- Have had a stroke or injury that limits the movement of your legs
- Take certain medicines or treatments

## Signs of DVT

**Call 911** or go to the nearest emergency department if you have shortness of breath or chest pain.

**Call your doctor right away** or go to the nearest emergency department if you have any of these signs:

- Tender, swollen or red areas that may be warm to the touch over the vein. **Do not** massage or exercise a painful leg or arm.
- Numbness or tingling in the body part affected
- Aching or pain in the body part affected
- Fever or chills

## How to Prevent DVT

- Your doctor may have you wear support stockings. The stockings help your blood flow to prevent clot formation.
  - ▶ Remove the stockings **each day** for 10 to 30 minutes. Check your feet and legs for redness, bruising or sore areas.
  - ▶ Ask your nurse or therapist how to put on the stockings to avoid very tight or wrinkled areas.
  - ▶ Lotion may be used if your legs are dry. Allow the lotion to dry and then powder your legs lightly to make it easier to put on the stockings.
  - ▶ You should have 2 pairs of stockings so that you have a pair to wear while the other pair is being washed and dried. Wash the stockings each day with mild soap, rinse and air dry.
- Walk every day and do leg and arm exercises to help your blood flow. Ask your doctor or therapist what type of exercise is best for you.
- Avoid sitting or lying in one position for long periods of time. Do not sit with your legs crossed or with constant pressure on the back of the knees. If your legs tend to swell, raise them on a stool when sitting.
- Avoid smoking, especially if you are taking birth control pills.
- Drink at least 8 glasses of liquids each day unless you have been told to limit your fluids.

## Treatment

DVT is often treated with blood thinning medicine. The medicine may be given as:

- An IV (intravenous) – You may need to stay in the hospital during treatment.
- Injections into the skin near the stomach – If you need to give yourself injections, you will be taught how to do this.
- Pills – Take your pills as ordered by your doctor. **Call your doctor** if you have any unusual bleeding, dark or bloody urine or stool, or unusual bruising.

You may need to have blood tests done at the lab or doctor's office while you are on this medicine. Follow the schedule your doctor orders.

**Talk to your doctor or nurse if you have any questions or concerns.**