



Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT) Prevention

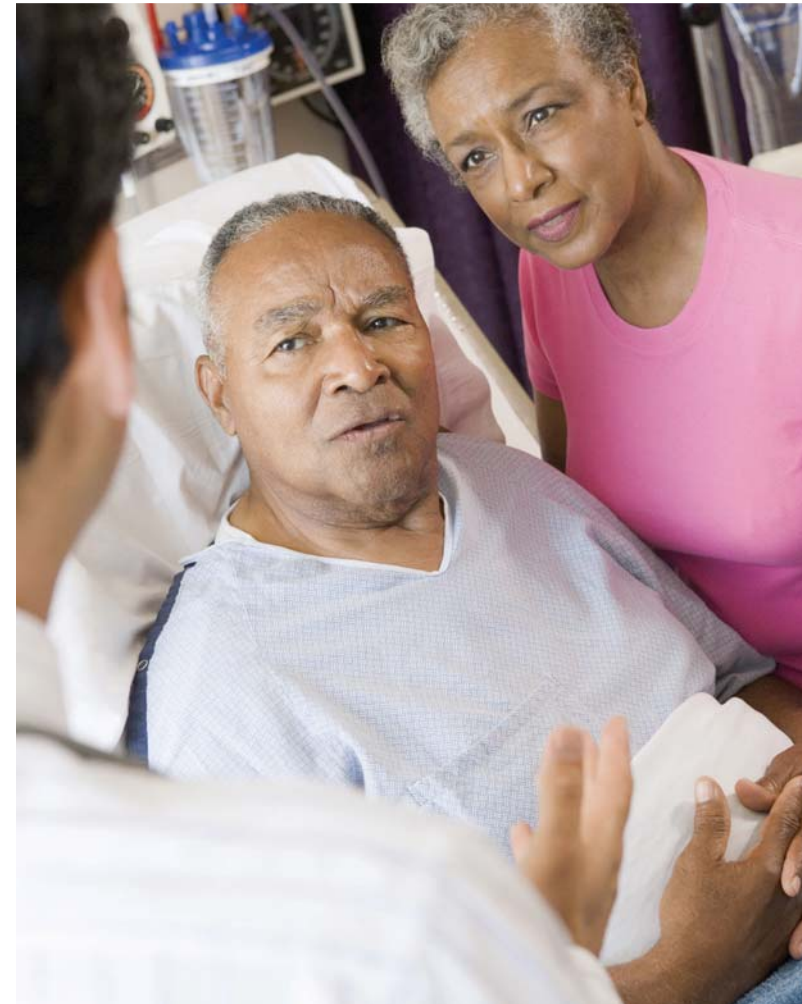
When to Seek Medical Attention

Call 911 right away if you experience:

- Sudden chest pain
- Shortness of breath
- Fast heartbeat
- Sweating
- Fainting
- Coughing up blood
- Pain, swelling, redness or warmth in the calf or thigh

Otherwise, call your doctor right away if you have any problems with your anticoagulant, such as a cough with bloody sputum, bruising, heavy or uncontrolled bleeding, or blood in your urine, stool or vomit.

Adapted from Palo Alto Medical Foundation, a Sutter Health affiliate





What is deep vein thrombosis?

Deep vein thrombosis (DVT) is a condition that causes a blood clot to form inside a deep vein, usually in the calf or thigh, which can partially or completely block blood flow.

What are the symptoms of DVT?

Often DVT is silent or produces minimal symptoms, which may include pain, sudden swelling of the legs and/or discoloration and warmth of your large veins.

What causes DVT?

- Immobility
- Prolonged sitting/bed rest
- Surgical procedures
- Trauma to veins
- Pregnancy
- Obesity
- Certain medications
- Smoking
- Cancer
- Personal history/family history

How is a DVT diagnosed?

DVT is usually diagnosed with specific imaging studies – ultrasound, CAT scan or MRI.

How is DVT treated?

DVT can be treated with blood thinning medications and using elastic hose or pneumatic sequential ankle pumps before and after surgical procedures.

How can blood clots be prevented?

- Stay active. Immobility increases the risk of developing clots. If you've been sitting for a long period of time (such as long-distance travel) stop and take a break to stretch your legs.
- Maintain an ideal body weight.
- Know your risk factors, and discuss them with your doctor.
- Know your family medical history, and share it with your doctor.
- If you are hospitalized or planning surgery, ask your doctor: "What will be done to prevent blood clots?" You may be given a blood-thinning medication (anticoagulant) or special stockings designed to prevent blood clots.

DVT can still occur even after you go home. To prevent DVT, follow any specific instructions your health care provider gave you, as well as these guidelines:

- **Anticoagulant** – Take this medication as directed. Know which foods and other medications can interact with it and avoid dangerous interactions. Also, ask your health care provider what to do if you forget a dose.
- **Compression stockings** – Continue to wear these as instructed. Your health care provider will tell you how often to wear and remove them. Each time you remove your stockings, check your legs and feet for red spots or sores. If you see anything suspicious, call your health care provider right away.
- **Returning to activity** – The key to preventing DVT after surgery is to be as active as you can. This improves circulation so that blood flow doesn't slow down enough to form a clot. Increase the amount of activity you do around your home each day. When resting in bed or sitting in a chair, do the foot exercises you did in the hospital.
- **Sequential compression device** – Your health care provider may instruct you to use this at home. Follow the instructions carefully on how often and for how long to use it each time.