

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT DEEP VENOUS THROMBOSIS

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What Is Deep Venous Thrombosis?

Deep venous thrombosis (DVT) is a blood clot in the veins deep in the leg. If the clot is big enough, it may cause pain and swelling. It is important to treat DVT so the clot does not get worse. Also, the clot could move to the lungs and cause serious breathing problems, circulation problems, and even death. DVT can happen:

- If you don't move your legs enough after an injury
- While in the hospital, when you are in bed for a long time
- After an operation
- During a long airplane trip
- In some people with cancer
- In some women who take birth control pills or hormones
- In people with blood that clots more easily
- For no clear reason

What Are the Warning Signs?

In about half of all DVT cases, there may be no symptoms. Some symptoms are:

- Swelling in the leg, including the ankle and foot
- Pain in the leg. The pain often starts in the calf and can feel like cramping
- Skin that feels warm to the touch
- Changes in skin color (redness)

How Is It Diagnosed?

Your doctor will examine your leg. He or she may order a test called an ultrasound to see if there's a clot in the veins of the leg. Ultrasound is painless and creates a picture of the veins. Also, blood tests may be done to check if you are at a higher risk for blood clots.

How Is It Treated?

Medicines called blood thinners are given to prevent more clots in the leg and keep a clot from going to the lungs. People with DVT may need to take blood thinners for many months, sometimes longer. Special stockings, called pressure stockings, can help keep the leg from swelling while the clot is being treated.

Questions for My Doctor

- What are my risk factors for DVT?
- What can I do to prevent blood clots in the future?
- What are the risks and benefits of blood thinners?



- What symptoms require emergency care?
- How long will I need to stay on blood thinners?
- Are there any activities I should avoid?

Bottom Line

- DVT is a blood clot in the veins of the leg.
- While some DVTs can occur with no noticeable symptoms, warning signs may include pain and swelling of the leg, redness, and skin that feels warm to the touch.
- DVT can be diagnosed with physical examination of the leg and ultrasound. Some blood tests may be needed.
- Medicines called blood thinners may be given to prevent new blood clots and to stop existing clots from getting bigger or traveling to the lungs. You may also be asked to wear a special stocking called a pressure stocking to prevent swelling.

For More Information



Medline Plus:

www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/000156.htm

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/dvt/facts.html