



DayInDayOut

WELCOA'S ONLINE BULLETIN FOR YOUR LIFESTYLE

Deep Vein Trouble

Recognize & Prevent Deep Vein Thrombosis

Most people have heard of “economy-class syndrome.” People who sit through long airplane flights without moving around can develop blood clots in veins deep within their lower leg or thigh. The condition is called deep vein thrombosis (DVT), and it’s not just airplane flights that can raise your risk. Anyone sitting in a car, at a desk or elsewhere for long periods of time without moving is at higher risk. And other factors you might not expect, like pregnancy, can also increase your risk for DVT.

DVT can cause serious complications if not treated. However, only about half of people with DVT have symptoms. The symptoms usually appear in only one leg. They may include a swollen area of the leg, pain or tenderness in the leg, increased warmth in the swollen or painful areas and red or discolored skin. You might only feel the leg pain when you’re standing or walking. It’s important to see a doctor right away if you have these symptoms.

Some people find out that they have DVT only after the clot has moved from the leg and traveled to the lung—a pulmonary embolism. Shortness of breath and chest pain when you take a deep breath are signs that you may have a pulmonary embolism.

MANY FACTORS MAY INCREASE YOUR RISK FOR DVT:

- Having an inherited blood clotting disorder.
- Having a recent injury, surgery or immobilization, which may slow blood flow in a deep vein.
- Undergoing treatment for cancer.
- Having other medical conditions, such as varicose veins.
- Sitting for a long period of time, for example, on a long trip in a car or airplane.
- Pregnancy, especially the first 6 weeks after giving birth.

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- Being over age 60, although deep vein thrombosis can occur in any age group.
- Being overweight.
- Taking birth control pills or hormone therapy.
- Having a medical device called a central venous catheter.

Doctors most often use a test called duplex ultrasound to diagnose deep vein clots. It uses sound waves to evaluate the flow of blood in your veins. A computer turns the sound waves into a picture. The picture is displayed on a TV screen, where your doctor can see the blood flow in your leg.

Several types of medicine may be used to treat or prevent DVT. The most common are anticoagulants, also known as blood thinners, which decrease your blood's ability to clot. Anticoagulant treatment for DVT usually lasts from 3 to 6 months.

If you're at risk for DVT or suspect you may have it, discuss it with your doctor.

PREVENTING DEEP VEIN THROMBOSIS

If you're at risk for developing a deep vein clot, you may be able to prevent one by:

- Exercising your lower leg muscles if you will be sitting still for long periods of time.
- Getting out of bed and moving around as soon as you are able to after a long period of being bedridden. The sooner you get active, the lower your chance of developing a clot.
- Taking the medicines prescribed by your doctor to prevent or treat blood clots.
- Following up with your doctor for medicine changes and blood tests.

