



The Johns Hopkins Hospital Patient Information

Original: Date
05/31/2014
Department:
VTE
Collaborative/
Surgery

How Do I Prevent Blood Clots? Venous Thromboembolism (VTE) Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT) Pulmonary Embolus (PE)

What is a blood clot or Venous Thromboembolism (VTE)?

Blood clots are called Venous Thromboembolism (VTE). There are 2 main types:

- Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT) is a clot in a deep vein, usually an arm or leg
- Pulmonary Embolism (PE) is a clot that has broken off and traveled to the lungs. This can cause death.

Are blood clots serious?

VTE kills more than 100,000 people every year. This is more than all the people killed by AIDS, motor vehicle collisions, and breast cancer combined.



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**Are blood
clots
serious?**

VTE can cause problems that may affect you for the rest of your life.

You may have:

- Long term problems with breathing
- A higher chance of getting another clot
- Swelling that will not go away
- Sores or wounds that will not heal

**How do I
know if I
have a
blood
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Some people who have VTE may not have any symptoms.



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How do I know if I have a blood clot?

People with DVT may have the following in an arm or leg:

- Swelling
- Pain or cramping
- Redness, tenderness, or warmth

People with PE may have the following:

- Shortness of breath or are unable to catch their breath
- Pain in the rib cage area
- Coughing up blood



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What causes blood clots?

People who are in the hospital have a higher chance of getting a VTE.

Other things that raise your chance of getting a clot:

Previous DVT/PE

Blood diseases

Family history of VTE

Major surgery

Trauma

Bed rest

Varicose veins

Obesity

Recent stroke

Pregnancy

Cancer and or chemotherapy

Birth control pills and or hormone replacement therapy



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The most common tests my care team may order to see if I have a blood clot?

Depending on your situation you may have

- A blood test called a D-Dimer
- An ultrasound of the arm or leg to look for the clot (DVT)
- A Cat Scan (CT) of the chest with IV (intravenous) dye to look for PE

How can I prevent a blood clot?

When you come to the hospital, the care team will look at all the risks you may have to get a clot.

They then order what is best for you, to help stop a clot from starting.



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How can I prevent a blood clot?

Medicines are the best way to stop a clot from forming.

- The 2 main medicines that are used to help prevent clots are Heparin and enoxaparin (Lovenox). Some people call them blood thinners.

These are shots that will be given to you, usually in the belly.

Special stockings also can help prevent clots.



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How can I prevent a blood clot?

The 2 main special stockings are:

- Sequential Compression Devices (SCDs)
use a machine and squeeze the legs or feet gently. These also help with blood flow. They need to be on as much as possible to help prevent clots.
- You may also be ordered compression stockings or TED hose. These also help with blood flow.



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How can I prevent a blood clot?

Although many people think walking around prevents blood clots, this is not true.

Moving around and walking are important to keep you well and can help prevent things like pneumonia and bedsores.

Walking by itself does not prevent clots.

This is why your care plan should also include medications and/or SCDs and/or compression stockings your care team has ordered.



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What happens if I do get a blood clot?

Depending on your specific condition you may need:

- An IV medicine such as heparin
- To take shots such as enoxaparin (lovenox)
- To take pills such as warfarin (Coumadin), rivaroxiban (Xarelto), or dabigatran (Pradaxa)

you may need:

- To take these medicines for months or possibly your whole life
- You may need to wear special stockings such as TEDs



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What happens if I do get a blood clot?

These stockings can decrease your risk of long term problems that can be caused from having clots.

- Some people may need a special filter placed in a vein to “catch” the blood clot if it breaks free. Many of these can be removed after the danger from these clots have passed

Other Resources

You can ask your nurse for other handouts such as Warfarin education and bleeding precautions for patients on blood thinners.



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**Other
Resources**

Other online sites you can use are:

- National Blood Clot Alliance:

<http://www.stoptheclot.org/>

- North American Thrombosis Forum:

<http://www.natfonline.org/>

- Clot Care:

<http://www.clotcare.com/>

- CDC:

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/dvt/facts.html>