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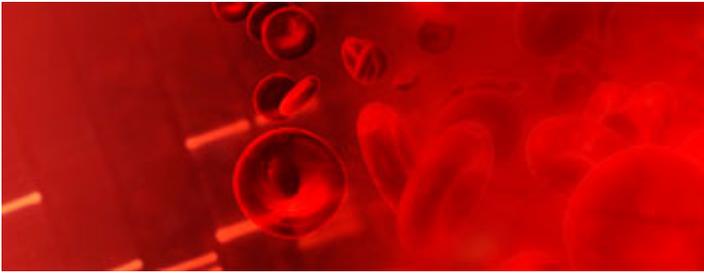
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# Are You At Risk for Deep Vein Thrombosis?



Deep vein thrombosis (also called DVT or blood clots) occurs when a blood clot forms in a large vein. Part of a clot may break off and travel through the bloodstream to the lungs, causing a pulmonary embolism (PE) and, possibly, death. Take simple steps to protect yourself.

Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT) and Pulmonary Embolism (PE) are a major public health problem in the United States. Estimates suggest that 350,000 to 600,000 Americans have a DVT or PE each year, and that at least 100,000 people die as a result. Many of those who have a DVT or PE also have complications that can greatly impact their quality of life.

Everybody should know the risk factors, symptoms, and steps they can take to protect themselves.

## Factors that increase the risk of developing DVT include:



- Major surgery
- Immobility, such as being in the hospital and long travel
- Recent injury
- Increased estrogen, from birth control pills, pregnancy, and certain medications
- Certain chronic medical illnesses, such as heart disease and cancer
- Previous DVT
- Age (risk increases as age increases)
- Obesity
- Smoking

## Know the symptoms of DVT and PE:

### Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT)

About half of people with DVT have no symptoms at all. For those who do have symptoms, the following are the most common and occur in the affected part of the body (usually the leg):

- Swelling
- Pain
- Tenderness

- Redness of the skin

## Pulmonary Embolism (PE)

If you have a PE, you might:

- Find it hard to breathe
- Have a faster than normal heart beat
- Have chest pain or discomfort, which usually worse with a deep breath or coughing
- Cough up blood
- Have very [low blood pressure](#) or lightheadedness, or black out

If you have any of these symptoms, you should seek medical help immediately.

### Five steps you can take to protect yourself:



1. When sitting for long periods of time, such as when traveling for more than four hours:
  - Get up and walk around every 2 to 3 hours.
  - Exercise your legs while you're sitting by:
    - Raising and lowering your heels while keeping your toes on the floor.
    - Raising and lowering your toes while keeping your heels on the floor.
    - Tightening and releasing your leg muscles.
  - Drink plenty of water, and avoid drinking anything with alcohol or caffeine in it.
2. Move around as soon as possible after having been confined to bed, such as after surgery, illness, or injury.
3. If you are at increased risk, talk to your doctor about wearing graduated compression stockings (sometimes called "support hose" or "medical compression stockings").
4. If you are at increased risk, talk to your doctor about medication (anticoagulants) to prevent or treat DVT.
5. [Exercise](#) regularly, maintain a [healthy weight](#), and [don't smoke](#).

## CDC Activities

CDC is conducting research to learn more about risk factors for DVT and the effects of thrombophilia (inherited risks for DVT) on pregnancy. In addition, CDC funds a research network of specialized thrombosis and hemostasis centers, as well as a health promotion and wellness initiative to provide people with information about how to prevent DVT and its complications.