

Recognizing And Treating Deep Vein Thrombosis

What is deep vein thrombosis (DVT)?

- A DVT is a blood clot that forms in a vein, usually in the lower leg or thigh
- A piece of the clot may break off, travel through the bloodstream, and lodge in the lungs – this is a serious condition called a **pulmonary embolism (PE)**
- DVT is a medical emergency and should be treated quickly and appropriately
- DVT is treated with medications called anticoagulants that keep the blood from clotting

What are the risk factors for DVT?

- You may be at increased risk for DVT or PE if you have one or more of the following:
 - Damage to the lining of the veins due to surgery or injury
 - Slow blood flow in the legs, for example if you are sitting for a long time while traveling, or ill or in bed
 - Blood that is more likely to clot than normal, which can be an inherited condition or caused by hormone treatments or birth control pills
 - A history of a previous DVT or PE
 - Cancer
 - Are older than age 60 years
 - Are pregnant
 - Are overweight

What are the signs and symptoms of DVT and PE?

- The most common signs and symptoms of DVT are:
 - Swelling in a leg or arm
 - Limb pain, tenderness
 - Pain upon touching the affected area, or only when standing or walking
 - Skin that is overly warm to the touch
 - Significantly red skin color
 - Lack of pulse in the extremities
- The most common signs and symptoms of PE are:
 - Unexplained shortness of breath
 - Pain with deep breathing
 - Coughing up blood
 - Rapid breathing and fast heart rate
- Contact a doctor immediately if you experience any of the signs or symptoms listed above

What are the most important things to remember when taking an anticoagulant for treatment or prevention DVT?

- Anticoagulants are very effective to prevent and treat DVT and PE because they make the blood less likely to clot
- If you have DVT or PE, you may be treated with an injectable anticoagulant for the first few days, then a pill for 3 to 6 months, or longer – your doctor will help you decide based on your risk factors
- Because they keep the blood from clotting, anticoagulants increase the risk for bleeding, including potentially serious or fatal bleeding
- Call your doctor immediately if you unexpectedly experience bleeding, bleeding that lasts a long time, or other signs and symptoms that may indicate bleeding, such as:
 - Unusual bleeding from the gums
 - Frequent nose bleeds
 - Menstrual periods that are heavier than normal
 - Bleeding that is severe or that you cannot control
 - Pink or brown urine
 - Red or black, tarry stools
 - Bruises that happen without a known cause
 - Coughing up blood, or vomiting blood or vomit that looks like “coffee grounds”
 - Headaches, or feeling dizzy or weak

