

Preventing Blood Clots



Understanding Deep Vein Thrombosis

What is Deep Vein Thrombosis?

Deep vein thrombosis (DVT) is a condition in which a blood clot forms in a deep vein in the body. It can block blood flow in the vein. It occurs most often in the legs, but can also occur in the arms.

How can DVT affect a patient?

A major concern is that a blood clot will form, break off, and travel to the lungs, which can be life-threatening. For many patients, a hospital stay, where walking is limited, can increase the risk for blood clots. The doctors and nurses are very aware of this and may take measures to help prevent DVT.

What can be done to prevent blood clots?

In the hospital, patients are assessed to find out if they are at risk for blood clots. Depending on the patient's risk, steps may be taken to help prevent blood clots from forming.

Is there anything that can be done during my stay in the hospital to help prevent blood clots?

Yes. Doctors may ask you to get out of bed and walk as soon as you are able. They may also have special sleeves or "boots" applied to your lower legs. These boots will gently squeeze your legs to help blood flow better in your veins. The boots should be kept on while you are in bed or seated in the chair. They may be removed for bathing, but should be put right back on after you bathe. They should be kept on until you are able to get back to walking on a routine basis. It is possible that your doctor may order a low dose of a blood thinning drug while you are in the hospital. With some surgeries, this drug may also need to be continued at home. Your doctor and nurse will inform you about your medication requirements prior to leaving the hospital.



What you can do to help.

Take the right steps to preventing blood clots:

- Let your doctor and nurse know if you have had blood clots in the past
- Get up and walk when you are able to do so and ordered by your doctor
- Keep your special boots on until you are back to walking
- Keep as active as possible once you get home