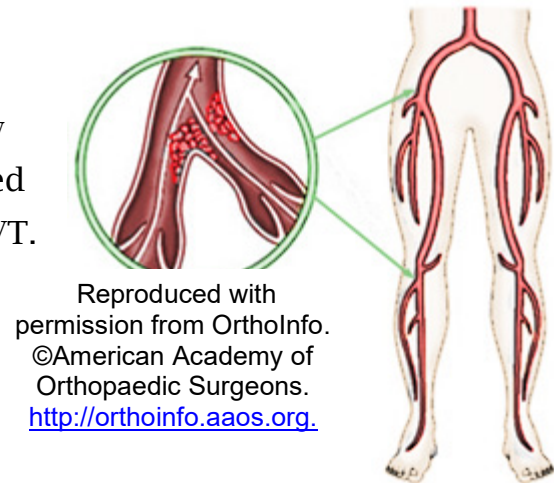


# What You Need to Know about Preventing a Blood Clot in the Hospital

## What is a Blood Clot?

- A blood clot can form when blood thickens and clumps together. This changes the flow of blood in the veins. This condition is called Deep vein thrombosis (throm-BO-sis), or DVT.
- Most deep vein blood clots occur in the lower leg or thigh.
- A blood clot in a deep vein can break off and travel through the bloodstream. The loose clot is called an embolus (EM-bo-lus). It can travel to an artery in the lungs and block blood flow. This condition is called pulmonary embolism (PULL-mun-ary EM-bo-lizm), or PE.
- PE is a very serious condition. It can damage the lungs and other organs in the body and cause death.



## What are the symptoms?

Only about half of the people who have DVT have signs and symptoms. These signs and symptoms occur in the leg affected by the deep vein clot. They include:

- Swelling of the leg or along a vein in the leg
- Pain or tenderness in the leg, which you may feel only when standing or walking
- Increased warmth in the area of the leg that's swollen or painful
- Red or discolored skin on the leg

Some people aren't aware of a deep vein clot until they have signs and symptoms of PE. Signs and symptoms of PE include:

- Shortness of breath
- Rapid heart rate
- Unexplained cough and/or coughing up blood
- Chest pain, especially with deep breathing

**Could I be at risk?**

Most hospitalized people have at least one risk factor for DVT. Some risk factors are:

- Age over 40
- Smoking
- Being bedbound, or sitting for long periods of time
- Taking birth control pills or estrogen
- Having one of the following conditions:
  - Chronic lung disease
  - Heart failure
  - Serious infection
  - Inflammatory bowel diseases
  - Cancer
  - Previous blood clot or a clotting disorder
  - Varicose veins
  - Stroke
  - Respiratory Failure
  - Obesity
  - Recent surgery
  - Recent fracture

**What can be done to prevent DVT in the hospital?**

- Walking is one of the best things you can do to help reduce your chance of getting a blood clot.
- In addition to walking, there are two types of treatments to help prevent clots: Medications and devices.

	<b>Devices</b>	<b>Medications</b>
<b>Why use it?</b>	Improve blood flow	Prevent blood from clotting
<b>What kinds are available?</b>	Stockings Foot pumps Inflatable devices (SCD's)	Blood thinners: Heparin & Lovenox® are most common

### What can I do to prevent a blood clot while I am in the hospital?

- Be out of bed as much as you can. Walk in the halls at least six times per day if your doctor approves it. (If you are on fall precautions, ask for assistance before you get out of bed)
- Exercise while you are in bed: Point your toes toward the bottom of the bed, then up toward your face. Repeat 10 times each hour you are awake.
- Talk to your doctor or nurse about your risk for developing a blood clot. Ask if you need medications and/or devices to help reduce your chance of getting a blood clot.
- If your doctor orders medications be sure to receive all doses.

### It is important to remember...

Medications	Devices
In order to prevent blood clots, it is important that you receive all doses of the medication ordered for you. Its important you received these medications even if you are able to get up and walk.	Remember to wear the devices that improve your blood flow when you are sitting in a chair or resting in the bed. It is important for you to wear the devices even if you are able to get up and walk throughout the day.

### Where can I learn more about DVT and PE?

- <http://www.clotconnect.org/>
- <http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/dvt/index.html>

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