

Deep vein thrombosis (DVT) is a blood clot that forms in a deep vein, often in the calf or thigh. The clot can partially or completely block blood flow and damage blood vessels. If a blood clot breaks free, it can travel to the lungs and cause pulmonary embolism (PE), which can be serious.

DVT Risk Factors

The risk of developing DVT is greatest during the 10 days following surgery. Other common risk factors for DVT include:

- ❖ Limited mobility
- ❖ Congestive heart failure
- ❖ Personal or family history of DVT
- ❖ Smoking
- ❖ Overweight
- ❖ Respiratory failure
- ❖ Birth control pills
- ❖ People who are 40 or older

General DVT Prevention

There are a few things you can do to prevent DVT. Your doctor and nurse will work with you to determine the DVT prevention methods that are right for you.

- ❖ **Move as soon as possible**- After surgery, get out of bed and move around as soon as your doctor tells you it is OK to do so. Ask a nurse or family member to assist you if you feel unsteady.
- ❖ **Exercise**- exercising your lower leg muscles is important especially when you sit for long periods of time. It decreases the pooling of blood in your legs. Try to do the DVT prevention exercises below several times a day, while you are recovering from surgery.
- ❖ **TED hose and SCD's**- Your doctor may prescribe thrombo embolic deterrent stockings (TED hose) and/or sequential compression devices (SCD) to promote blood return and prevent DVT formation.
- ❖ **Blood thinners**- Your doctor may prescribe blood-thinning drugs, also called anticoagulants, after surgery. Blood thinners prevent blood clots but also increase the risk of bleeding.

Signs of a DVT/PE

In your calf or thigh:

- Pain
- Swelling
- Redness
- Warmth

Or generally:

- Shortness of Breath
- Palpitations
- Chest pain
- Lightheadedness
- Sweating

If you experience any of the above symptoms in the period after surgery, call you doctor or go to the nearest emergency department.

There are a few simple exercises you can do to help prevent DVT, particularly in situations when you are seated for a long time. Perform these exercises several times a day.

- **Toe lifts**- With your heels on the floor; lift the toes and the front of the foot as high as possible, then put both feet flat on the floor. This keeps your calf muscles working to prevent blood from pooling
- **Ankle Rotation**- Rotate your feet clockwise and counterclockwise for 30 seconds. Sit with your knee bent and circle your foot. While doing this exercise, be sure that you are only moving your foot and ankle. Your leg or knee should not move. Perform both of these exercises several times a day.