



# Spot a clot

**Blood clots:**

**What YOU need to know.**



## What are blood clots?

Blood clots are common, potentially life-threatening, *but treatable* and *generally preventable disorders* that include two related conditions:

- 1) **Deep vein thrombosis (DVT)** - Abnormal clotting of the blood in a deep vein. DVT most commonly occurs in one or more veins of the leg or pelvis.  
*and*
- 2) **Pulmonary embolism (PE)** - Occurs when a DVT breaks free from its original site in a vein and then travels through the bloodstream and into the lungs.

## Why should I be concerned about blood clots?

- Up to 1 million Americans get blood clots every year and many of these are hospitalized as a result
- Blood clots are the 3rd most common vascular disease after heart attack and stroke
- Up to 300,000 Americans die from PE every year. In most cases of fatal PE, death occurs suddenly with little or no chance for treatment
- Every year, more people die from blood clots than from breast cancer, AIDS and traffic accidents combined
- Although blood clots are common, few Americans have any knowledge about blood clots and how to prevent them

*The Venous Disease Coalition wants you to become aware of the risk factors for blood clots as well as the warning symptoms of blood clots so you can protect yourself and your family.*

**DVT and PE should be considered emergencies that require immediate care if any of the symptoms below are present!**

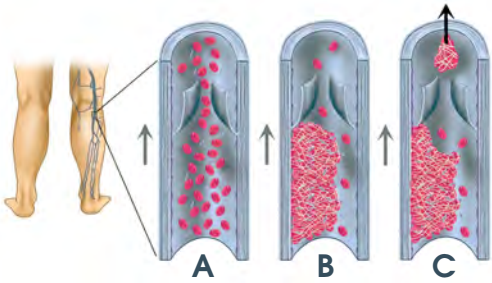
### Symptoms of Possible DVT

- Recent swelling of one leg
- Unexplained pain or tenderness of one leg

### Symptoms of Possible PE

- Recent or sudden shortness of breath
- Sharp chest pain especially when breathing in
- Coughing up blood
- Sudden collapse

# Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT)



- A. Normal Blood Flow
- B. Deep Vein Thrombosis
- C. Embolus

Illustration is used with permission by the Society of Interventional Radiology

## What are risk factors for blood clots?

Following are some risk factors that increase the risk of getting blood clots:

- Recent major surgery
- Cancer and its treatment
- Major trauma or injuries to the leg
- Previous DVT or PE
- Hospitalization with an acute medical illness
- Pregnancy
- Use of the birth control pill or hormone replacement therapy
- A family history of DVT or PE
- Obesity

## How are blood clots treated?

Both DVT and PE are treated with anticoagulants which are sometimes called “blood thinners”. Anticoagulants decrease the blood’s ability to clot to a controlled degree. They stop clots from getting bigger and they prevent new clots from forming.

## What can be done to prevent blood clots?

### *In general*

- Stay active
- Don’t smoke or stop smoking if you do
- Maintain a normal body weight

### *In the hospital*

- The risk of blood clots in hospitals can generally be prevented with low doses of blood thinners or by other means
- Be sure to discuss the prevention of blood clots with your doctor before elective surgery
- Tell doctors and nurses that you want them to prevent the development of blood clots
- Move your legs often and walk frequently if this is possible
- Report any unexplained chest or leg symptoms to staff



Venous Disease Coalition  
[www.venousdiseasecoalition.org](http://www.venousdiseasecoalition.org)

The Venous Disease Coalition (VDC) is an alliance of leading health professional societies and patient advocacy groups united to improve the survival rates and quality of life for individuals with, or at risk for, venous disease. It is a program of the Vascular Disease Foundation, a national 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization. Printing is courtesy of unrestricted educational grants from BSN Jobst, ConvaTec, DIOMED, Inc. and Spirit of Women.

