

Self-Care for Deep Venous Thrombosis (DVT)

Deep venous thromboses are blood clots in deep veins. Deep veins are within the muscle of the leg and in the pelvis. These clots are often treated with blood thinning medication (anticoagulant) to minimize the risk that they may enlarge, break loose and travel to the lungs. Blood clots that travel to the lungs can be life-threatening. Whether or not a blood thinner is recommended for you depends on the circumstances under which the clot developed, your symptoms, the size and the location of the blood clot.

Your provider has checked you carefully, however, occasionally new problems can arise. Seek medical attention right away if you develop any new symptoms.

Follow-up care is a very important part of your treatment. Be sure to make and keep all appointments recommended by your provider. It is a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of medications you are taking.

The following are home measures to care for yourself:

1. Take your medications exactly as they are prescribed. Call your prescribing provider if you believe you are having a problem with your medication.
2. The following are general guidelines for patients taking a blood thinner:
 - a. Avoid hazardous or risky activities that could lead to injury such as contact sports or high-speed sports/activities. A few examples include biking, skiing, four-wheeling or snowmobiling. Blood thinners can cause serious and even life-threatening bleeding. If you are unsure if an activity is safe, ask your provider or avoid that activity.
 - b. Notify your medical or dental providers that you are taking a blood thinner before undergoing any procedure or surgery.
 - c. Avoid Aspirin and NSAIDs (eg Ibuprofen, Advil, Motrin, Aleve, Naproxen) while taking an anticoagulant unless directed otherwise by your provider. Adding these medications can increase your risk of bleeding.
3. Your provider may prescribe graduated compression garment(s) to be worn during waking hours. As a general rule, these should be professionally fitted garments to ensure the proper strength, fit and style (eg knee-high vs thigh-high).
4. When you are not active, elevate your leg(s) above heart level as much as possible. A pillow under your leg(s) can be used to increase elevation if needed.
5. Walk frequently throughout the day. Avoid sitting without elevating your leg(s) or standing for long periods as much as possible. While sitting or standing, pump your foot up and down by alternating standing on your heel and standing on your toes. Walking and foot pumps activate the calf muscle to move blood in your veins.

When should I call for help?

Call 911 anytime you think you may need emergency care. For example:

- You are dizzy, lightheaded or feel like you may faint.
- You faint/pass out (lose consciousness).
- You have difficulty breathing or feel like you cannot catch your breath.
- You have sudden chest pain, shortness of breath, or you cough up blood.
- You have problems with your vision or balance.

Call the clinic or seek immediate medical care for:

- Worsening pain in your leg.
- Worsening swelling in your leg.
- Color change of the skin of your leg.

