



Colorado

Foot Institute

Blood Clot or Deep Vein Thrombosis or DVT

GENERAL INFORMATION

What is it? A blood clot or a deep vein thrombosis is also called “DVT”. It is a blood clot that forms inside a vein. The clot may block part or all of the blood flow. It may also break away from the vein wall and travel into your lung or heart. DVT usually occurs in the legs or pelvis, but may also occur in other parts of the body.

Causes: A DVT may be caused by blood that pools or sits in a vein. Resting in bed for a long time after surgery or during a long illness, or injury may cause blood to pool. This may cause a blood clot to form. Sometimes the lining of the vein may be injured and a blood clot may form. *You may be more susceptible to getting a DVT or a blood clot if you smoke, if there is a family history of blood clots. Other possible risk factors are women taking birth control pills, those over the age of 60.*

Signs and Symptoms: You may have swelling, pain, or redness in the area of the clot, such as the calf or thigh. One of your calf or thigh veins may feel hard, like a cord. You may have a fever, walking may hurt, you may feel short of breath and/or even chest pain. If you have any concerns, please call our office and/or go to the nearest emergency room.

To lower your risk and help prevent DVT, take these steps:

- Stay hydrated; drink plenty of water
- Maintain an active lifestyle and exercise regularly -- daily, if possible. Walking, swimming, and bicycling are all great activities.
- Manage your weight with exercise as well as by eating a healthy diet.
- If you smoke, quit! Nicotine therapy (in patches, gums, or sprays) and support groups can make this much easier to do.
- Get your blood pressure checked regularly; take steps to lower it, if necessary.
- Report any family or personal history of blood-clotting problems to your doctor.
- Discuss alternatives to birth control pills or hormone-replacement therapy with your doctor.
- If you are on an airplane or sitting for extended periods, ~2-4 hours, either walk or do leg stretches in your seat and also stay well-hydrated and *avoid alcohol consumption.*

Your DVT risk begins with becoming immobile (i.e. surgery, cast, fracture walker) and continue for several months following. ***You are at highest risk for a blood clot the day of surgery and/or the day you are immobilized and for ~10 days afterward.***

- Wear compression stockings on your legs, to support your veins and keep blood flowing through your veins.
- Elevate the foot of your bed.
- Every 1-2 hours, check the circulation on your toes and remember to reposition yourself.
- Get up and move as soon as you can after surgery, or after you've been ill.
- Take pain medicine as prescribed to make it easier to move around.
- Also to prevent DVT, do mild foot/leg exercises like leg lifts and gentle foot and/or ankle exercises, depending on your injury.