



**THIS IS SERIOUS**

# What is DVT?

Deep vein thrombosis (DVT) occurs when an abnormal blood clot forms in a large vein. These clots usually develop in the lower leg, thigh, or pelvis, but can also occur in other large veins in the body.

If you develop DVT and it is diagnosed correctly and quickly, it can be treated. However, many people do not know if they are at risk, don't know the symptoms, and delay seeing a healthcare professional if they do have symptoms.

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## CAN DVT HAPPEN TO ME?

Anyone may be at risk for DVT but the more risk factors you have, the greater your chances are of developing DVT.

**Knowing your risk factors can help you prevent DVT:**

- Hospitalization for a medical illness
- Recent major surgery or injury
- Personal history of a clotting disorder or previous DVT
- Increasing age
- Cancer and cancer treatments
- Pregnancy and the first 6 weeks after delivery
- Hormone replacement therapy or birth control products
- Family history of DVT
- Extended bed rest
- Obesity
- Smoking
- Prolonged sitting when traveling (longer than 6 to 8 hours)

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## DVT SYMPTOMS AND SIGNS:

**The following are the most common and usually occur in the affected limb:**

- Recent swelling of the limb
- Unexplained pain or tenderness
- Skin that may be warm to the touch
- Redness of the skin

Since the symptoms of DVT can be similar to other conditions, like a pulled muscle, this often leads to a delay in diagnosis. Some people with DVT may have no symptoms at all.

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## DVT AND PULMONARY EMBOLISM (PE):

DVT can cause a life-threatening complication called pulmonary embolism (PE). Part or all of a clot can break off and travel through the bloodstream and into the lungs. A blood clot in the lungs can be life-threatening and can cause death.

### Symptoms of possible PE can include:

- Recent or sudden shortness of breath
- Chest pain or discomfort, which worsens with a deep breath or coughing
- Coughing up blood
- Sudden collapse

If you have any of these symptoms, it is an emergency and you should seek medical help immediately.

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## WHAT CAN BE DONE TO PREVENT DVT AND PE:

Most DVT and PE can be prevented.

### In general:

- Exercise regularly
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Don't smoke
- When sitting for long periods of time, or when traveling for more than six hours:
  - Exercise your legs frequently while you're sitting
  - Get up and walk around every 2 to 3 hours
  - Wear loose-fitting clothes
  - Drink plenty of water, and limit alcohol and caffeine

### Before and during hospitalization:

- Before any surgery, talk to your health-care provider about prevention of blood clots
- Tell your healthcare provider if you have any risk factors for DVT
- Ask questions
- If you have been confined to bed, move around as soon as possible
- After surgery or hospitalization for a medical illness, a small dose of anti-coagulant medication is often given to prevent DVT and PE

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## DIAGNOSING DVT AND PE:

### DVT is generally diagnosed using:

- Venous Doppler ultrasound—using sound waves to check the flow of blood in the veins

### PE is generally diagnosed using:

- Computerized tomography (CT scan) of the lung, a special type of X-ray that can provide pictures of structures inside the body
- Ventilation-perfusion lung scan, a special test that shows how much blood is getting into the lungs

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## WHAT IS THE TREATMENT FOR DVT AND PE:

### DVT Treatment:

- Anticoagulants are also used to treat PE. In cases of severe PE, medicines (thrombolytics) may be given to dissolve the clot, followed by anticoagulants to prevent more clots from forming.
- Compression stockings, also called elastic stockings, are sometimes recommended to relieve pain and swelling after DVT.

### PE Treatment:

- Anticoagulants are also used to treat PE. In cases of severe PE, medicines (thrombolytics) may be given to dissolve the clot, followed by anticoagulants to prevent more clots from forming.

To take a free risk assessment, or for more information on DVT and PE, including risk factors, symptoms, signs, prevention, and treatment, visit

[www.thisisserious.org](http://www.thisisserious.org).