What Is Deep Vein Thrombosis?

Deep vein thrombosis (DVT) is a blood clot in the leg. Blood clots occur in the veins deep in the leg. They may also occur in other parts of the body.

A blood clot is a group of blood cells that come together to make a solid mass. When a blood clot forms in a vein, it can become bigger and travel through the bloodstream. The risk factors for deep vein thrombosis (DVT) include:

- A history of DVT.
- Slow blood flow in a deep vein due to lack of movement. This may occur after surgery, if you're ill and in bed for a long time.
- Hormone therapy or birth control pills also can increase the risk of clotting.
- Venous thromboembolism (VTE). This term is used for both deep vein thrombosis and pulmonary embolism.
- A blood clot in the leg.
- Anticoagulants (AN-te-ko-AG-u-lants) are the most common medicines for treating DVT. They're also known as blood thinners.
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- Overweight or obesity.
- Old age. Being older than 60 is a risk factor for DVT, although DVT can occur at any age.
- Recent or ongoing treatment for cancer.
- Pregnancy and the first 6 weeks after giving birth.
- A central venous catheter. This is a tube placed in a vein to allow easy access to the bloodstream for medical treatment.
- A history of DVT.
- An inherited or acquired condition that makes your blood coagulate too easily.
- Medical History
- To learn more about your medical history, your doctor may ask:
  - Your family medical history: Do any members of your family have VTE?
  - Any recent medical treatment: Have you received any recent medical treatment that might have affected your blood's ability to clot?
  - How was the blood thinning prescribed or prescribed by you?
  - Your overall health
  - Any prescription medicines you're taking
  - Your weight
  - Your age

- You may be treated with a blood thinner immediately after the diagnosis of DVT. Your doctor will monitor your response to the blood thinner and adjust the dose as needed.
- Bed rest and early ambulation may be prescribed to help prevent a blood clot from forming again.
- Anticoagulants (AN-te-ko-AG-u-lants) are the most common medicines for treating DVT. They're also known as blood thinners.
- Other tests you may need to use diagnosis include:
  - Pulmonary embolism (PE). See your doctor right away if you have signs or symptoms of PE.
  - An inherited or acquired condition that makes your blood coagulate too easily.
  - If you have a small blood clot in your leg, it may not be diagnosed until after you receive emergency treatment.
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- How Is Deep Vein Thrombosis Diagnosed?

  - Physical exam
  - Ultrasound
  - CT scan
  - MRI
  - Blood tests
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- How is Deep Vein Thrombosis Treated?

  - Deep vein thrombosis (DVT) and pulmonary embolism (PE) are the two main forms of blood clots. They're also known as blood thinners.
  - Other tests you may need to use diagnosis include:
    - Pulmonary embolism (PE). See your doctor right away if you have signs or symptoms of PE.
    - A blood clot in the leg.
    - Anticoagulants (AN-te-ko-AG-u-lants) are the most common medicines for treating DVT. They're also known as blood thinners.

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Blood thinners can be taken as a pill, an injection under the skin, or through a needle or tube inserted into a vein (called intravenous, or IV, injection).

Heparin and heparin-like agents are two blood thinners used in DVT. Warfarin, on the other hand, is a medication that is taken by mouth (oral). Heparin is given an hour or two before you leave the hospital. Warfarin is usually started a day or two after you leave the hospital.

Your doctor may give you both therapies and you may have to take both for several months after the initial episode. Your doctor may prescribe these medications for as long as 12 months and stop them for a period of time. The duration of treatment is determined by the type of clot, the location of the clot, and whether you have had DVT before.

Warfarin and heparin are two blood thinners used to treat DVT. Warfarin is given in pill form. (Coumadin® is a common brand name for warfarin.) Heparin is given as an injection or through an IV tube. There are different types of heparin. Your doctor will discuss the options with you.

These medicines interfere with the blood clotting process. They’re used to treat blood clots in patients who can’t take heparin.

You can take steps to prevent deep vein thrombosis (DVT) and pulmonary embolism (PE). If you have had blood clots before, your treatment time may be longer. If your blood clot occurred after a short-term risk (for example, surgery), your treatment time may be shorter.

Clinical Trials

The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) is strongly committed to supporting research aimed at preventing and treating heart, lung, and blood diseases and injuries in adults and children.

Research has increased our understanding of diseases and conditions and sleep disorders.

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For more information about clinical trials related to deep vein thrombosis, talk with your doctor. You also can use the NHLBI’s Find Clinical Trials (Health Topics) Web page.

For more information about clinical trials related to children, visit the NHLBI’s Children and Clinical Studies Web page.

Signs and symptoms of bleeding in the brain include:

- Sudden loss of movement in your arms or legs
- Inability to speak or understand speech
- Severe headache
- Nausea or vomiting
- Unusual bleeding
- Seizures

If you suspect you or someone else may have bleeding in the brain, contact your doctor at once. For more information, go to "What Are the Signs and Symptoms of Brain Hemorrhage?" in the Emergency section.