

Your Health Education

Blood Clots: What You Can Do to Prevent Them

You are at risk for a blood clot. Surgery, infections, lack of movement, and being in a hospital are risk factors for a blood clot. A blood clot is when blood does not flow normally through your blood vessels. This can be very serious and can even cause death. Blood clots affect 900,000 Americans and are responsible for over 100,000 deaths each year.

Other names for blood clots:

- Deep vein thrombosis (DVT) is a clot in the leg or arm.
- Pulmonary embolism (PE) is a clot in the lungs.

What you can do to prevent a blood clot:

- Take medicines that thin your blood (called anticoagulants)
 - > You may need to get this medicine as shots, pills, or both. Please talk to your care team if this is not a good choice for you.
- Use the Sequential Compression Device, or SCD
 - > Your doctor may recommend this machine to improve blood flow in your legs. The sleeves wrap around your legs and connect to a machine that fills and then removes air from the sleeves.
 - > It is very important to always use the machine when you are in bed or in a chair. Ask someone to remove the sleeves before walking.
- Wear TED Hose
 - > These stockings are given to some patients to push blood toward their heart.

- Walk/Exercise your legs
 - > Get out of bed and walk as many times a day as you can because exercise/movement helps your blood to flow.
 - > Point your toes up to tighten your calves and then relax them. Do this as many times a day as you can.

When you leave the hospital you are still at risk. It is important to take your medications, walk, and exercise your legs.

Learn more about blood clot prevention by watching a video at www.UPMC.com/healthlibrary on your phone or when you get home. Search for blood clot video in the search bar. Select "Preventing Blood Clots in Leg Veins Video."