

Do I have an increased risk of bleeding?

Anticoagulant medications lower your risk of developing a blood clot, but can increase your risk of bleeding. If bleeding occurs, it can be managed by a health care professional. Talk to your physician or community health nurse if any of the following apply to you:

- You are taking **anticoagulant drugs** (e.g. Coumadin [warfarin], Pradax or Xarelto).
- You are **taking medication that affects blood clotting**, such as aspirin or clopidogrel (Plavix), and some pain medications.
- You have a known bleeding disorder (**e.g. haemophilia**).
- You have a **low platelet count**.
- You have a **past history** of major bleeding or a bleeding peptic ulcer.
- A **family history** of major bleeding.
- You have had a **stroke** recently.
- You have a **very high blood pressure**.
- You have **severe liver or kidney disease**.

Reducing your Risk

Talk to your physician or community health nurse if you think you are experiencing any of the factors that can increase your risk of developing a blood clot. Other things that you can do include:

- Drink adequate amount of water prior to and after a surgery or stay in the hospital.
- Using anti-embolism stockings or an intermittent pneumatic compression device to help keep the blood in your legs circulating.
- After a stay at the hospital, try to move around and be active, as this will help increase blood flow and reduce your risk of clots forming.
- Depending on your risk, your physician or community health nurse may also prescribe you a drug called an anticoagulant that prevents blood clots from forming.

Talk to your physician or healthcare team about other ways you can reduce your risk of blood clots.

For more information, please contact your local hospital or health centre.

Une version française de ce document est disponible.



Preventing Blood Clots



Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT) and Pulmonary Embolism (PE)

What are Blood Clots?

Normally, blood flows easily through your blood vessels. A blood clot is when a 'plug' develops in your blood vessels. When an injury occurs, like a cut, the body creates blood clots to stop the bleeding. Sometimes a blood clot forms even when there has been no injury. A clot that forms in an artery or vein can change the ease of blood flow or even block the flow entirely.

Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT)

Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT) is when a blood clot forms deep inside a vein in your body, usually in the lower leg. While some people have no symptoms, often pain, redness, tenderness and swelling will occur around the site of the clot.

Pulmonary Embolism (PE)

A Pulmonary Embolism (PE) is when a blood clot comes loose and travels through your bloodstream to your lungs. Symptoms of a PE may include light-headedness, sharp chest pain and shortness of breath. If the clot is large enough, sometimes a PE may cause death.

Sign and Symptoms

After a surgery or hospital stay seek help from your health care professional immediately if you experience any of the following symptoms, especially in the days or weeks after your treatment.

Symptoms of a DVT

- Pain or swelling in your leg or calf.
- The skin on your leg feels warm or is discolored (red, purple, or blue).
- The veins near the surface of your legs appear larger than normal, or you notice them more.

Symptoms of a PE

- Sudden breathlessness or shortness of breath that cannot be explained.
- Sudden sharp pain in your chest or upper back.
- Light-headedness or coughing up blood (does not always occur).

Do I have an increased risk of getting a blood clot?

The following factors increase your risk of a blood clot:

- A **trauma or injury**, particularly to your legs.

- A **recent hospital stay**, staying in bed 3 or more days, or **immobilization** (unable to walk without help, or spend a large part of the day in bed or in a chair).
- **Surgery**: any operation taking longer than 90 minutes, or 60 minutes if the operation is on your leg, hip or abdomen.
- A **family history** of blood clots.
- **Cancer treatment** (chemotherapy or radiotherapy), OR you have cancer which is not in remission.
- Being over the **age of 60**, particularly if your mobility is poor.
- Having a **blood disorder** that affects how your blood clots.
- **Chronic (long term) medical conditions** such as diabetes, inflammatory conditions (e.g. rheumatoid arthritis), and heart or lung problems.
- Being **overweight** (having a body mass index (BMI) of more than 30).
- **Pregnancy**.
- **Oral contraception** (birth control) or hormone therapy that contains estrogen.