

YOU HAVE SUPERFICIAL VEIN THROMBOSIS

PATIENT INFORMATION SHEET

WHAT IS SUPERFICIAL VEIN THROMBOSIS?

Superficial vein thrombosis (sometimes called phlebitis) occurs when blood clots and inflammation form in a vein close to the surface of the skin. These clots may also form in the arms, though this is less common. Superficial vein thrombosis is less serious than clots in the deep veins of the leg, known as deep vein thrombosis (DVT) or blood clots in the lungs, called pulmonary embolism (PE).

- Superficial vein thrombosis can cause short-term pain, tenderness, redness, bruising and swelling in a part of your leg or your arm.
- If left untreated, there is a small chance that superficial vein thrombosis can get worse and develop into DVT. Most of the time it will go away after a few weeks.
- These types of blood clots do not cause strokes or heart attacks.
- Superficial vein thrombosis can be diagnosed through a physical examination. Sometimes you will need an ultrasound scan.



WHAT CAN CAUSE SUPERFICIAL VEIN THROMBOSIS?

Risks for developing superficial vein thrombosis include:

- Having varicose veins
- Minor injury to the skin
- Being treated for cancer
- Obesity
- Recent surgery
- Pregnancy
- Age over 60
- Birth control or hormone therapy containing estrogen
- Being given medication through an IV (intravenous tube) in the arm

TREATMENT

Superficial vein thrombosis can be managed in several ways:

Anticoagulants (blood thinners): Superficial vein thrombosis can be treated with anticoagulants (sometimes called blood thinners). Anticoagulants prevent the existing blood clot from getting larger and prevent new blood clots from forming. You might be prescribed medications such as rivaroxaban, apixaban or low molecular weight heparin (LMWH) for 6 to 12 weeks.

Anti-inflammatory medications: Superficial vein thrombosis can be treated with oral anti-inflammatory medications such as ibuprofen (Motrin®, Advil®) and naproxen (Alleve®) or topical anti-inflammatory agents like diclofenac (Voltaren®).

Warm compresses: If the superficial vein thrombosis is very tiny, it can be treated with warm compresses alone.

YOU HAVE SUPERFICIAL VEIN THROMBOSIS

DO I NEED A SCAN AFTER TREATMENT?

No, there is no need to have an ultrasound scan at the end of your treatment. Your vein may remain solid to the touch for a year or so after superficial vein thrombosis. This is just part of the healing process.

AM I AT RISK OF OTHER BLOOD CLOTS?

It is unlikely that you will have more serious clots such as DVT or PE in the future. Some people with varicose veins develop repeated episodes of superficial vein thrombosis. You should always see a healthcare professional if the symptoms come back.

Always ensure you are up to date with government-recommended cancer screening tests such as mammograms, stool tests, Pap tests and prostate screening.

TAKE AWAY MESSAGES

- Superficial vein thrombosis can cause short-term pain, tenderness, redness, bruising and swelling in a part of your leg or your arm.
- It will not cause a heart attack or stroke.
- Depending on its location, there may be a small chance that the superficial vein thrombosis could spread into deep veins increasing the risk of DVT or PE.
- Treatment options include anticoagulants, anti-inflammatory medications, or warm compresses if the thrombosis is very tiny.



© Thrombosis Canada, April 2025



Thrombosis Canada
Thrombose Canada

TEL | 647-528-8586
EMAIL | info@thrombosiscanada.ca
WEB | www.ThrombosisCanada.ca

DOWNLOAD OUR APP



Google play



FOLLOW US ON



@THROMBOSISCAN