

You Have a DVT

Deep Vein Thrombosis

What is a DVT?

A DVT is a blood clot in the deep vein of the leg.

Why are DVTs important?

They can cause short term and long term pain and swelling in the leg. They can move to the lung (pulmonary embolism = PE) and these may cause death.

What can cause a DVT?

Immobility

- Being in bed for a few days or more
- Cast on the leg, not able to stand or walk
- Air travel for 6 or more hours

Injury to blood vessels

- Broken bones, accidents
- Major surgery

“Hypercoagulability” (tendency to clot)

- Medical conditions (such as cancer)
- Hormones (estrogen, pregnancy)
- Genetic risk factors/family history of DVT/PE

Ask your doctor about other risk factors.

Treatment

- DVT is treated with anticoagulants (“blood thinners”)
- Usually pills, but you may start on injections first
- How long you are on treatment will depend on your risk of having another blood clot and your risk of bleeding, but is usually at least 3 months
- Treatment is sometimes long term
- Main side effect is bleeding:
 - Minor (nose/gum bleeds, bruising)
 - Major (coughing blood, blood in vomit, urine or stool, black stool)

Take Away Message

- DVT is serious and can lead to life threatening complications
- Anticoagulant treatment should be taken regularly the way your doctor tells you
- Tell your doctor if you have new symptoms of a blood clot or major bleeding

What are symptoms of DVT?

- Swelling - usually of one leg
- Pain in the calf, inner thigh or groin
- Redness and warmth of the affected leg
- Rarely (with severe swelling) the leg may:
 - Be cold, have purple/blue discoloration
- Be aware of symptoms of PE:
 - Shortness of breath
 - Chest pain

