

# 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

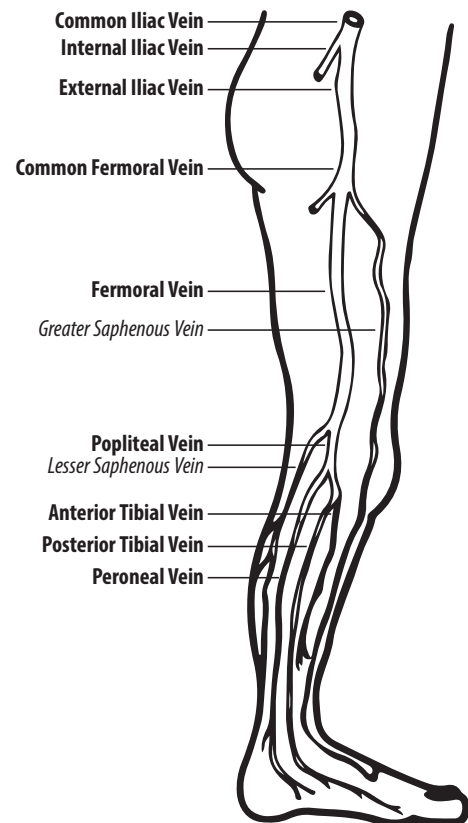
Ask your doctor about other risk factors.

### 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)

### 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



### 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