

A blood clot (or thrombus) that forms in a large, deep vein is called a deep vein thrombosis (DVT). If a DVT is not treated, part of the clot (embolus) can break off and travel to your lungs. This can cut off the flow of blood to part or all of the lung, termed pulmonary embolism (PE). PE is a medical emergency and may cause death. Healthcare providers use the term venous thromboembolism (VTE) to describe the two conditions, DVT and PE. They use the term VTE because the two conditions are very closely related and because their prevention and treatment are also closely related.

DVTs can develop if you have certain medical conditions and underlying risk factors that affect how your blood clots. It can also happen if you don't move for a long time, such as after surgery, a long-haul flight or an accident; or when you're confined to bed for prolonged periods. The coronavirus appears to disrupt the normal clotting cascade and there seems to be an increasing number of cases of DVT and strokes in patients with Covid-19. In addition to this, if not from the virus itself, then prolonged bed-rest owing to the illness or lack of physical activity (even as a result of lockdown!) can indirectly increase your risk of developing a DVT.

SYMPTOMS

DVT signs and symptoms can include:

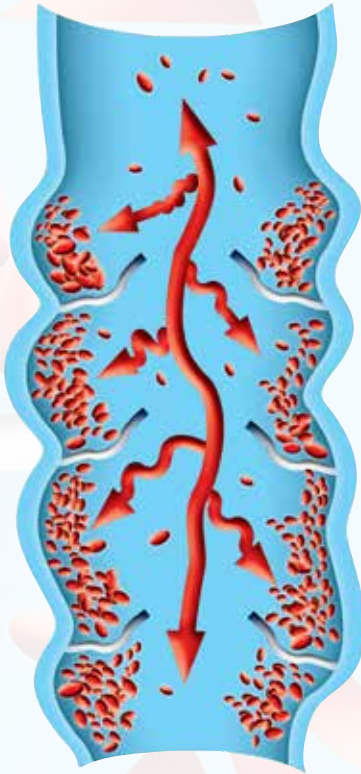
- swelling in the affected leg (rarely, there's swelling in both legs);
- pain in your leg (the pain often starts in your calf and can feel like cramping or soreness);
- red or discoloured skin on the leg; and/or
- a feeling of warmth in the affected leg.

DVT can also occur without noticeable symptoms.

Warning signs and symptoms of a PE include:

- sudden shortness of breath;

Recovering From Deep Vein Thrombosis



- chest pain or discomfort that worsens when you take a deep breath or when you cough
- feeling lightheaded or dizzy, or fainting;
- rapid pulse; and/or
- coughing up blood.

When to See a Doctor

If you develop signs or symptoms of DVT, contact your doctor.

If you develop signs or symptoms of a PE – a life-threatening complication of DVT – seek immediate medical attention.

MEDICAL CARE

Your healthcare provider will usually prescribe a blood-thinning (anticoagulant) medicine. This medicine helps prevent new blood clots. Blood thinners can be given by mouth (oral), by shot (injection), or into your vein (intravenous or IV). These medicines increase the chance of bleeding. So it's very important to take them correctly. Be sure to tell all of your healthcare providers, including dentists, that you are taking a blood thinner.

Regular follow-up monitoring will be scheduled to ensure the correct dose of medication is given. Too much can cause excess bleeding, so which can be very serious. Too little may not prevent blood clots from harming you.

DIET AND WARFARIN

Vitamin K helps your blood to clot, but it can interact with warfarin and counter its efficacy in thinning your blood. You don't need sudden changes in your diet but being aware to monitor large consumptions of vitamin K will help. Foods rich in vitamin K that you should be aware of include:

- leafy green vegetables (such as spinach, cabbage and kale);
- avocado;
- asparagus;
- egg yolks; and
- certain oils (such as canola, olive and soybean).

HOME CARE

To help prevent blood clots, try following the recommendations below.

- Wiggle your toes and move your ankles while sitting or lying down.
- When traveling by car, make frequent stops to get up and move around.
- On long aeroplane rides, get up and move around when possible. If you can't get up, wiggle your toes, move your ankles and tighten your calves to keep your blood moving.
- If you have to stay in bed, do leg exercises.
- Wear support or compression stockings, if prescribed by your healthcare provider.
- Rest and put your legs up whenever they feel swollen or heavy.
- Raise the foot of your mattress 5 to 6 inches, using a foam wedge.

LIFESTYLE CHANGES

To help you stay healthy, especially your heart and blood vessels, you should try to do the following.

- Start an exercise programme, if you are not exercising. Ask your healthcare provider how to get started. Try walking, inside or out.
- Stay at a healthy weight. Get help to lose any extra pounds.
- Keep blood pressure in a healthy range.
- If you smoke, make a plan to quit. Ask your healthcare provider about stop-smoking programmes to help you quit.

Many people wonder about moving around too much after a DVT, especially if standing or walking is still painful. But if your healthcare professional is encouraging you to be more active, try and walk a little more each day, as light activity may



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improve any symptoms you may still be feeling and even prevent post-thrombotic syndrome (chronic pain in the legs following a DVT).

Having a DVT can be very painful and scary. But DVT recovery goes beyond the physical – there are mental and emotional aspects to consider as well. While taking your medication, eating well and staying active is a great start to your recovery. It's not uncommon to feel a lot of strong emotions after having a DVT – especially if it's not your first one or it's taking longer than you expected for the pain to go away. If you don't feel like yourself, you may benefit from some of the following techniques to manage feelings of stress, anxiety, frustration, and even anger.

1. Ask for help

Don't be afraid to reach out to a friend or family member for help if you need it. Recovering from a DVT can be difficult, and knowing you have someone to lean on can be reassuring. You may also want to investigate local support groups (even online virtual groups) that you can join.

2. Get enough sleep

Everyone is different, but most healthy adults need about 6–8 hours of sleep each night. Getting enough quality sleep has a positive impact on your mood, eating habits, energy levels, and more. Try to stay more active, limit caffeine and screentime before bed, and establish a consistent bedtime to give yourself the best chance of a good night's sleep.

3. Consider meditation or yoga

Mindfulness practices, such as meditation or yoga, can help reduce feelings of stress or anxiety. Both practices focus on the breath and acknowledging thoughts as they come and go. Yoga is also a great way to stay active. Not ready to join a local yoga class or download a meditation app? Simply stopping what you're doing once or twice a day to breathe deeply can help calm and clear your mind.

4. Find healthy outlets for stress

When your stress levels are elevated, try taking a walk or writing your feelings down



Tips to make walking a daily habit

1. Buddy up!

Walking is more fun if you have a partner. Ask a friend or family member to take a walk with you around your neighbourhood or in a local park. Take it slow, especially within the first month after a DVT, and follow your healthcare professional's instructions about wearing compression stockings.

2. Invest in comfy shoes

Find sneakers or walking shoes that are supportive and comfortable. If you have foot issues, consider asking your healthcare professional about orthopaedic inserts.

3. Dress the part

It's cold out? Bundle up in layers. You can always take off a heavier jacket or sweatshirt if you get too warm. For hotter climates, loose-fitting clothing in breathable cotton or sweat-wicking material will help keep you cool and comfortable.

4. Hydrate

Bring a bottle of water with you to make sure you're replenishing fluids as you walk.

5. Build toward your goals

Talk to your healthcare professional and listen to your body to determine how much walking you feel is manageable, even if it's just in 5- to 10-minute increments. You can increase your time as you start feeling better and your confidence builds.

in a journal. Participating in a hobby that you love or volunteering can also help you manage stress.

5. Practise gratitude

Even when times are tough, gratitude can lift your spirits and gently shift your thinking. Before you go to sleep at night, try to think of three things you were thankful for that day – they don't have to be big things,

either. The laughter of a child or the sight of flowers in your garden can be positive reminders of the good things in life.

After a DVT, you're probably eager to start feeling better. Taking your medication is a great start, but feeling your best requires attention to each element of your health, including physical activity, diet and emotional support!

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