

Treating Blood Clots

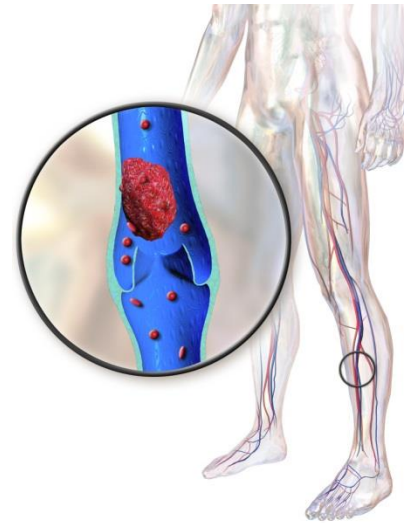
WHAT IS A BLOOD CLOT?

A blood clot is a thickened mass of blood that has changed from liquid to semi-solid. Clots are needed to stop bleeding, such as at the site of a cut. But clots can be dangerous if they form inside blood vessels or organs.

WHAT IS A DEEP VEIN THROMBOSIS?

A deep vein thrombosis (DVT) is a blood clot that forms inside a vein. Most DVTs form in the leg veins, either above or below the knee, but they can also occur in other areas.

If DVTs are not treated right away, the clots can break apart and travel to other parts of the body. A piece of blood clot that travels to another part of the body and gets lodged is called an embolus.



WHAT CAUSES A DVT?

DVTs can occur:

- After surgery or an injury
- When you are inactive for a long time, like being in the hospital or in bed while you are ill
- After long trips in a car or plane

Your risk of getting a DVT is higher if you have certain disease or are taking certain medicines that increase the risk of blood clotting. But, DVTs sometimes occur without a clear cause.

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF A DVT?

The most common signs of a DVT are:

- Swelling in the affected leg (or arm)
- Pain or tenderness in the affected leg (or arm)
- Redness or colour changes in the affected leg (or arm)

WHAT IS A PULMONARY EMBOLISM?

Clots that form in the veins can travel to other parts of the body, including the lungs. A blood clot in the lungs is called a pulmonary embolism (PE). Sometimes a PE occurs with no clear cause.

A PE can be life-threatening because it cuts off the blood supply to the lungs. It must be treated right away.

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF A PE?

The most common signs of a PE are:

- Chest pain
- Rapid heart beat
- Shortness of breath
- Cough

HOW ARE BLOOD CLOTS TREATED?

Blood clots are treated with blood-thinning medicines (anticoagulants). Depending on the medicine the doctor prescribes, you may receive it:

- As an intravenous infusion. The medicines include:
 - Heparin
 - Bivalirudin
- As an under-the-skin injection given once or twice a day. These medicines include:
 - Heparin
 - Enoxaparin (Lovenox)
 - Dalteparin (Fragmin)
 - Fondaparinux (Arixtra)
- As a pill, taken by mouth once or twice a day. These medicines include:
 - Warfarin (Coumadin)
 - Apixaban (Eliquis)
 - Edoxaban (Savaysa)
 - Dabigatran (Pradaxa)
 - Rivaroxaban (Xarelto)

The medicine your doctor prescribed depends on:

- What caused your blood clot
- Other diseases and health problems you have
- Your body weight
- Your kidney function
- Other medicines you take
- Costs and your insurance coverage

Your doctor and pharmacist will work with you to choose the best medicine for you.

HOW LONG WILL TREATMENT LAST?

Most blood clots are treated for 3 months. But, some people need to take their medicine for longer than 3 months. Some people may need to take blood-thinning medicine for the rest of their lives. Your doctor and pharmacist will decide the best treatment for you based on your needs.

WHEN TO CALL

Call your doctor or your Anticoagulation Clinic, or come to the hospital emergency department right away if you:

- Have a serious fall
- Hit your head
- Have any of these signs of **bleeding**:
 - Red or dark brown urine
 - Red or black, tarry stool
 - Vomiting or coughing up blood
 - Severe headache or stomach ache
 - A lot of bruising or bruises that occur without a cause
 - Any bleeding that will not stop or is very heavy