
Am I at risk of getting a blood clot?

You may be at risk if:

- you have had an injury or trauma to your legs or head
- you have been in a hospital bed most of the time for the last 3 or more days
- you or your family has a history of blood clots
- you are having a surgery that is more than 1 hour long
- you are being treated for cancer or have cancer that isn't in remission
- you are pregnant
- you are using a birth control pill with estrogen in it
- you are weigh more than 120 kg or your BMI is greater than 35

Improving Patient Safety

Everyone plays a role in patient safety—patients, their families, healthcare providers, staff, and healthcare leaders.

We invite you to work with us to help make sure that you get the best possible care.

Be aware, be informed, and be involved.

You can find out more about blood clots on the *Safer Healthcare Now!* website at:
<http://saferhealthcarenow.ca>

For 24/7 nurse advice and general health information, call Health Link Alberta:

- Calgary: 403-943-LINK (5465)
- Edmonton: 780-408-LINK (5465)
- Toll-Free: 1-866-408-LINK (5465)

This material is for information purposes only. It should not be used in place of medical advice, instruction, and/or treatment. If you have questions, speak with your doctor or appropriate healthcare provider.

health information

Preventing Blood Clots While in Hospital

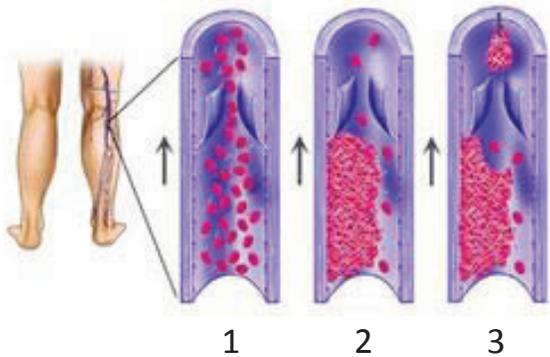


What do I need to know about blood clots?

Normally a blood clot is a healthy and lifesaving way for the body to heal itself when injured.

When a person isn't moving well or enough, blood can pool in the legs and cause blood clots to form. This is called a venous thromboembolism (VTE). This may lead to pain, redness, tenderness, and swelling in the area around the clot.

The illustration below shows a clot forming in a deep leg vein.



1. Normal blood flow.
2. A clot forming.
3. A clot breaking off and travelling in the vein.

2003 Society of Interventional Radiology

Another problem is the risk that part of the clot can break off and travel through the blood stream to the lungs, causing a pulmonary embolus (PE). This can cause chest pain, shortness of breath, and, rarely, even death.

What should I look for?

A blood clot usually happens in the lower leg, but can happen in any vein. Tell your healthcare team right away if you notice:

- your legs are swollen, especially if it's only one leg (see below)
- redness, heat, and tenderness in the lower leg
- chest pain, cough, and/or shortness of breath



Swollen leg caused by a blood clot.

You need to be treated right away to reduce the risk of complications.

You still need to be treated if you have these symptoms after you are discharged from the hospital. Call your doctor or go to the hospital right away.

How are blood clots prevented?

You may be prescribed medicine to stop blood clots from forming.

You may also wear stockings or leg pumps to keep the blood moving.

You can also:

- get up and walk if you are able to
- get up to your chair for meals
- do leg exercises in bed once every hour
- talk to your healthcare team about other ways to prevent blood clots