

PREVENT THE CLOT

What is Venous Thromboembolism (VTE)?

Venous Thromboembolism (VTE) is a term used to describe **abnormal blood clots** in the body and includes both:

- **Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT)**
- **Pulmonary Embolism (PE)**

VTE is **common** and **potentially life-threatening**. However, it is often **preventable** and **treatable if it occurs**.

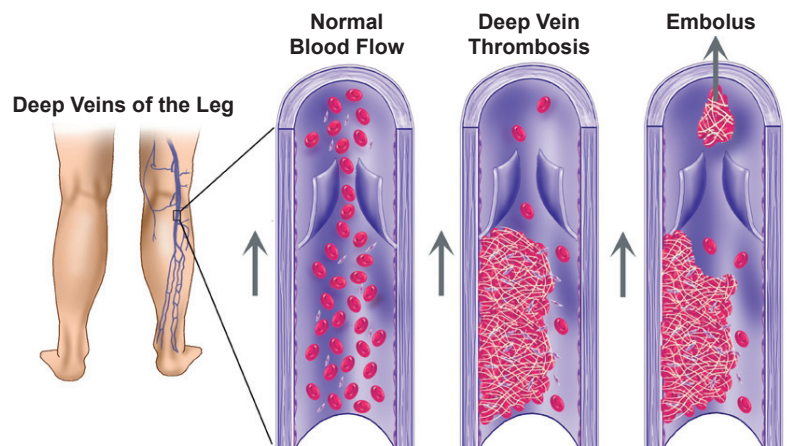
Normally, blood flows easily through the veins. If blood flow slows down or stops, the blood can form a clot which acts like a plug in the vein. This can lead to unpleasant symptoms or, in some cases, death.

If a blood clot forms inside a deep vein of the leg, it is called a **Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT)**.

If part or all of a blood clot in the leg breaks free, it can travel up through the veins and lodge in the lungs. This is called a **Pulmonary Embolism (PE)**.

What are risk factors for VTE?

- Recent surgery
- Cancer and cancer treatments
- Major trauma or injuries to the leg
- Acute illness
- Reduced mobility
- Obesity
- Pregnancy
- Use of birth control pill or hormone replacement therapy
- Smoking



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How do I know if I might have a DVT or PE?

Symptoms of a DVT may include:

- Recent swelling of one leg
- Unexplained pain or tenderness of one leg
- Redness, warmth or discolouration of the skin of one leg

Symptoms of a PE may include:

- Suddenly feeling out of breath without an explanation
- Sudden sharp pain in the chest especially when breathing in
- Coughing up blood

If you experience any of these symptoms during or after your hospital stay, you should report them immediately to your health care team.



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Why are blood clots so serious?

DVT can cause pain and swelling of the leg. It can also damage the vein and lead to long term leg swelling, discomfort or skin changes.

If DVT travels to the lungs and causes a **PE**, this may produce unpleasant symptoms and is sometimes fatal.

DVT and PE can occasionally happen in people who are otherwise healthy. However, the risk of developing a DVT or PE is greater if you have surgery or stay in hospital for another reason.

What can you do to reduce the risk of blood clots (VTE)?

In General:

- Stay active
- Don't smoke or stop smoking if you do
- Maintain a healthy body weight

If a hospital admission or surgery is planned:

- Tell your doctors that you want them to prevent the development of blood clots
- Inform your doctors if you have had a blood clot in the past or if you have a family history of blood clots
- Talk to your doctor about your risk factors for VTE

While you are in hospital:

- Ask your doctor or nurse "*What is being done to reduce my risk of getting a blood clot?*"
- Expect to receive an anticoagulant injection or tablet which reduces the chance of abnormal clotting in the blood
- Resume physical activity and walking as soon as your doctor permits it
- Drink plenty of fluids to keep hydrated
- Report new chest pain, shortness of breath, pain or swelling in the leg to a member of your health care team

If you experience any of these symptoms during or after your hospital stay, you should report them immediately to your health care team.

