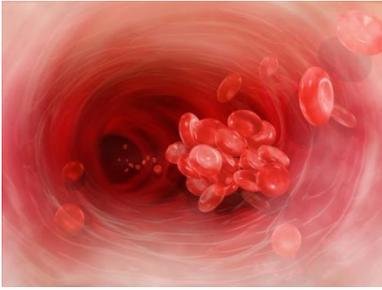


# Are You at Risk for Deep Vein Thrombosis?



A Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT) occurs when a blood clot forms in a large vein, usually the leg. If part of such a clot breaks off it travels to the lungs, causing a Pulmonary Embolism (PE) and, possibly, death.

Both, DVT and PE are a major public health problem in the United States. Estimates suggest that up to 600,000 Americans have DVT/PE each year, and that 10 to 20% will die as a result. Many of those who survive a DVT/PE episode will also have complications that greatly impact their quality of life.

Everybody should know the risk factors, symptoms, and steps they can take to protect themselves.

## Risk Factors for Developing a DVT Include:

- Major surgery
- Immobility, such as long travel or being confined to bed
- Recent injury
- Medications which increase estrogen (birth control pills, etc.)
- Pregnancy
- Chronic medical conditions such as heart disease and cancer
- Age (the risk increases as one's age increases)
- Obesity
- Smoking
- History of a previous DVT

## Know the Symptoms:

### Deep Vein Thrombosis

Almost half of people with DVT have no symptoms at all. For those who do have symptoms, the following are the most common and occur in the affected part of the body (usually the leg):

- Swelling
- Pain
- Tenderness
- Redness of the skin

### Pulmonary Embolism

- Difficulty breathing
- Chest pain or discomfort, which usually worsens with a deep breath or coughing
- Rapid heart beat
- Coughing up blood
- Very low blood pressure, lightheadedness, or black out

If you have any of these symptoms, seek medical help immediately.

## How to Protect Yourself:

### The following tips can help you prevent DVT/PE:

- Move around as soon as possible after having been confined to bed due to surgery, illness, or injury.
- If traveling or sitting for long periods of time (4 hours or more)



- get up and walk around every 2 to 3 hours or exercise your legs by moving them around and up and down
- Wear loose fitting clothes
- Drink plenty of water and avoid drinks with alcohol or caffeine
- Exercise regularly, maintain a healthy weight, and don't smoke
- If you believe you are at risk for DVT, talk to your doctor about it. There are medications (anticoagulants) and devices (compression stockings) to help prevent DVT.

