YOU HAVE A DVT OR DEEP VEIN THROMBOSIS

PATIENT INFORMATION SHEET

WHAT IS A DVT?

A DVT is a blood clot that occurs most commonly in the deep vein of the leg.

WHY ARE DVTS IMPORTANT?

- DVTs can cause short-term and long-term pain and swelling in the leg.
- If left untreated, DVTs can move to the lung where they cause pulmonary embolism (PE). Pulmonary embolism causes breathing problems and tiredness. Once DVT has moved to the lung, the clot is stuck there and cannot move.
- In most people, DVT cannot cause strokes or heart attacks.

WHAT ARE SYMPTOMS OF DVT?

- Swelling - usually of one leg
- Pain in the calf, inner thigh or groin
- Redness and warmth of the affected leg

WHAT ARE SYMPTOMS OF A PE?

- Shortness of breath
- Chest pain

WHAT CAN CAUSE A DVT?

For most people the reason for their DVT is never identified. The following may contribute to the a DVT:

Immobility

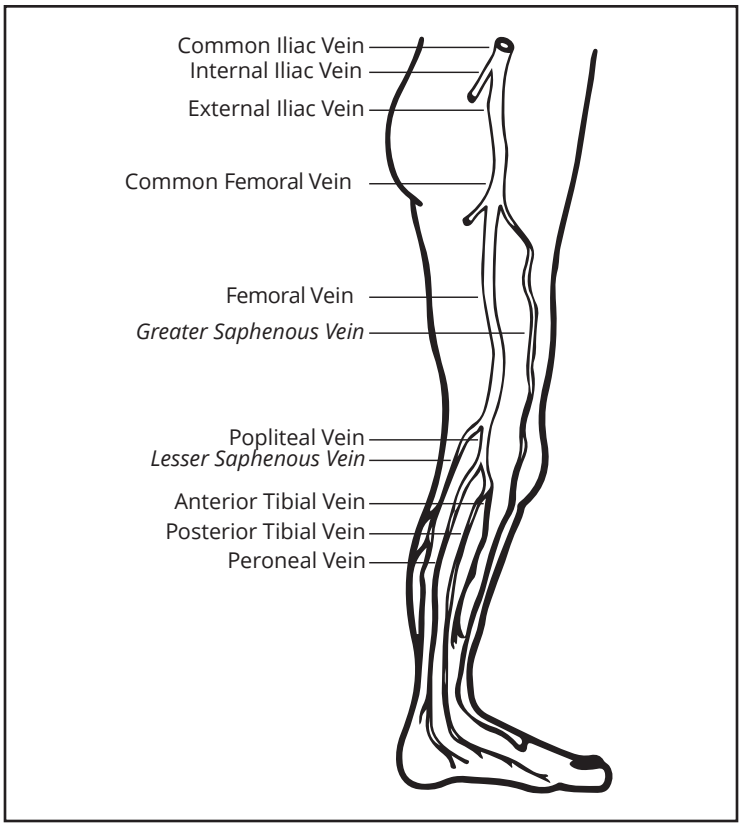
- Being in bed for a few days or more
- Cast on the leg, not able to stand or walk
- Air travel for 6 or more hours

Injury to blood vessels

- Broken bones, accidents
- Major surgery

Hypercoagulability (tendency to clot)

- Medical conditions (such as cancer)
- Hormones (estrogen, pregnancy)
- Genetic risk factors/family history of DVT/PE



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TREATMENT

- DVT is treated with anticoagulants (sometimes called blood thinners). Anticoagulants prevent new blood clots from forming and prevent the existing blood clot from getting larger.
- You must take these medications exactly as prescribed, on time, and not miss any doses.
- Usually, you will be prescribed pills. Some patients will need injections first
- Your healthcare professional will discuss how long you need to be treated during your clinic appointment. The duration (time) you will need blood thinners depends on why you developed DVT. This may be as short as 3-6 months or for years or longer.
- Take the anticoagulant for the whole time your healthcare professional tells you, and do not stop it without talking to your healthcare professional first.

SIDE EFFECTS OF BLOOD THINNERS

- Minor bleeding of gums, teeth, or nose
- Heavy menstrual periods (talk to your healthcare professional if this affects you)
- Rarely, you could cough up blood and/or have blood in your vomit, urine or stool. Blood in your stool can appear red, maroon or black. If this type of bleeding happens, **go to your emergency department**.
- If you hit your head and are knocked out, or suffer a concussion (headache, nausea, vomiting after the injury), **go to the emergency department urgently** to ensure you don't have bleeding in the brain.
- Many anticoagulants are not safe in pregnancy. Please discuss with your healthcare professional if you are planning to get pregnant

TAKE AWAY MESSAGE

- DVT is a serious but treatable condition
- Anticoagulants are the treatment and should be taken exactly the way your healthcare professional prescribes

LEARN MORE ABOUT THROMBOSIS WITH THE NEW PATIENT GUIDE.

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