

OrthoBethesda Therapy Services

Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT) and Pulmonary Embolism (PE) Information

A *deep vein thrombosis* (DVT) occurs when a blood clot forms in one of the deep veins of the body. Most often, this occurs in the legs. A DVT may form during extended periods of inactivity, such as lying in a hospital bed or sitting on a transcontinental airplane flight. A DVT may also occur in persons with certain medical conditions (i.e. heart failure, smoking) that cause the blood to become thicker or clot more easily. Some surgeries place persons at an increased risk for developing a DVT. A DVT is a serious condition. If a blood clot breaks loose, it can travel to the lungs where it may cause a *pulmonary embolism* (PE).

DVT Symptoms: (typically only present on one side, but may be present on both sides)

- Pain – often starts in the calf and feels like cramping or soreness
- Swelling
- Warmth
- Redness

PE Symptoms:

- Sudden, unexplained shortness of breath
- Chest pain/discomfort that increases while taking a deep breath or coughing
- Very low blood pressure, lightheadedness and/or dizziness
- Fast or irregular heart beat
- Coughing up blood

Prevention:

- Stay properly hydrated
- Regularly interrupt periods of inactivity with movement and stretching
 - Move as much as possible
- Perform ankle pumps (ideally with your legs elevated above the heart)
- If prescribed, take anticoagulants according to your physician's instructions
- Lose excess body weight
- Quit smoking
- Exercise regularly
- Wear compression socks