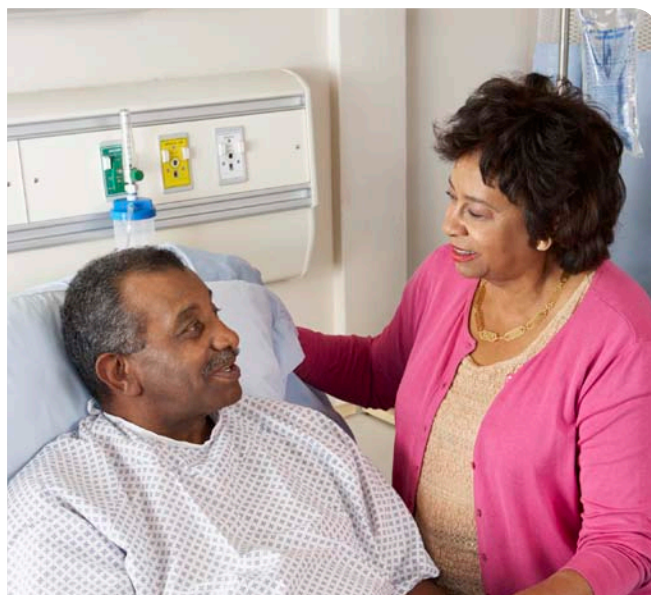




Who is at Risk for Venous Thromboembolism?

Venous thromboembolism (VTE) can affect men and women of all ages, races and ethnicities. People most at risk have extended hospital stays; are not moving for long periods because of bed rest or long-duration travel; and have had hip-, knee- or cancer-related surgeries.



What are risk factors for VTE?

You may be at risk for VTE if you have:

- Major general surgery
- Major orthopedic surgery
- Lower-extremity paralysis due to spinal cord injury
- Fracture of the pelvis, hip or long bones
- Multiple trauma
- Malignant diseases: Advanced cancers are associated with a high incidence of VTE, especially cancers of the breast, lung, brain, pelvis, rectum, pancreas, and gastrointestinal tract. Chemotherapy also increases risk.

Can pregnancy increase risk for VTE?

Yes. Women who are pregnant, or have just had a baby are at greater risk of developing a blood clot. The risks increase with:

- Previous blood clots
- A genetic predisposition to blood clots
- Obesity
- Prolonged immobility, such as bed rest and long distance travel
- Multiple births

- Increased maternal age
- Other medical illness, such as cancer and serious infection

What other factors could put me at risk?

Individually, the factors below are not enough to justify preventive measures for VTE. But a combination of two or more may be cause for action and could influence the type and duration of the prevention treatment.

- **Prior VTE** — Patients with a previous episode of VTE have a high chance of recurrence. In one study, patients with a history of VTE were eight times more likely to develop a new episode during a high-risk period, such as surgery or serious illness, than patients without such a history.
- **Age** — Patients older than 40 years are at higher risk, and that risk doubles with each subsequent decade.
- **Cardiac or respiratory failure**
- **Immobility** — Prolonged immobility combined with other major risk factors increases the risk of VTE.
- **Oral Contraceptives** — Women receiving estrogens for contraception or menopause and men

(continued)



receiving estrogen therapy for prostate cancer are at increased risk for VTE.

• **Some inherited or acquired blood conditions**

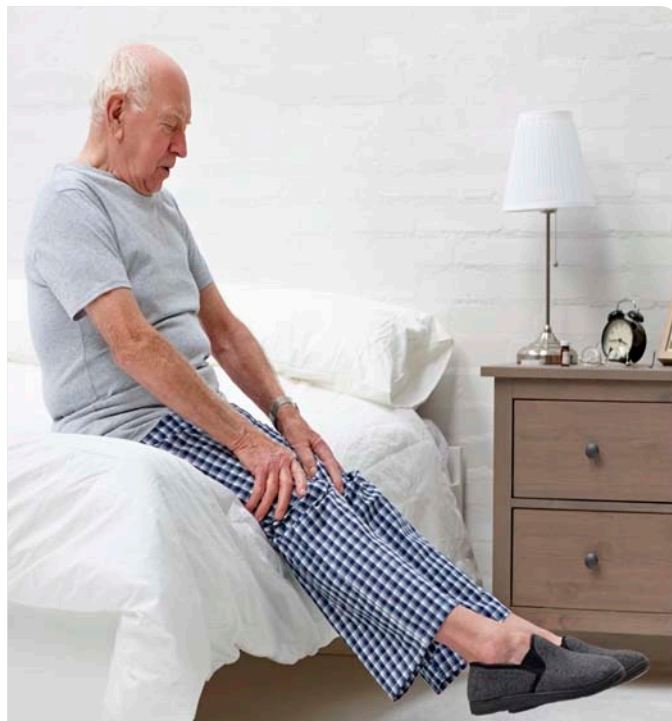
What are the warning signs of VTE?

DVT (deep vein thrombosis) mainly affects the large veins in the lower leg and thigh, almost always on one side of the body. The clot can block blood flow and cause:

- Changes in skin color (redness)
- Leg pain or tenderness, especially in the calf
- Leg swelling (edema)
- Skin that feels warm to the touch

PE (pulmonary embolism) can be fatal and occurs when the DVT breaks free from a vein wall and blocks some or all of the blood supply to the lungs, causing:

- Unexplained shortness of breath
- Rapid breathing
- Chest pain (may be worse upon deep breath)
- Rapid heart rate
- Light headedness or passing out



Leg pain or tenderness, especially in the calf, can be a warning sign of VTE.

HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

- 1** Call **1-800-AHA-USA1** (1-800-242-8721), or visit **heart.org** to learn more about heart disease and stroke.
- 2** Sign up to get *Heart Insight*, a free magazine for heart patients and their families, at **heartinsight.org**.
- 3** Connect with others sharing similar journeys with heart disease and stroke by joining our Support Network at **heart.org/supportnetwork**.

Do you have questions for the doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write your questions for the next time you see your healthcare provider.

For example:

What risk factors do I have for VTE?

What changes can I make to prevent it?

My Questions:

We have many other fact sheets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk, manage disease or care for a loved one. Visit **heart.org/answersbyheart** to learn more.

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