

Preventing Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT) in the Hospital

When you stay in the hospital, there's a chance that you could develop a blood clot called a deep vein thrombosis, or DVT.

They're called this because they are most common in the deep veins of your legs.

Your risk for a blood clot increases for several reasons when you're in the hospital. For example, you'll be less active and may be in bed or in a wheelchair.

Or you may have a catheter in a blood vessel, which can raise your risk for DVT.

Also, if you had surgery, it may cause changes in your blood vessels and how your blood clots.

Certain health problems, like cancer, make it more likely for your blood to clot.

If you get a DVT, you may have pain or swelling in your leg.

But there's a chance the clot could move from your leg to your lungs.

And that can be deadly.

The good thing is there are actions that you and your care team can take to help prevent blood clots.

First, move as often as possible— even if it's just in bed. Movement really helps blood flow.

Your care team may urge you to get up and walk for short periods, if you can.

If you're in bed or can't move around much, try to change your position often, and stretch or move your arms and legs as well as you can.

Follow your doctor's instructions for doing any exercises in bed.

A good plan may be to do them once every hour while you're awake.

Be sure to tell your care team if you have any new symptoms, such as pain or swelling in a leg or shortness of breath.

When you are in bed, you may wear compression sleeves on your legs. These sleeves inflate and gently squeeze your legs. This helps blood flow.

You may also get blood-thinning shots or medicines.

These help prevent blood clots.

The risk of DVT may seem scary.

But by using these tips and following your doctor's advice, you'll be doing all you can to prevent blood clots while you're in the hospital.