

# Preventing Deep Vein Thrombosis

Deep vein thrombosis (DVT) occurs when blood clots form in a vein far below the skin. It happens most often in legs. Inactivity, a leg injury, smoking, medical conditions (such as heart disease), and certain types of surgery can make a DVT more likely. A DVT can cause pain and serious health problems. To help prevent a DVT, follow the steps below.

## Elevation

Elevating (raising) you feet and legs helps keep blood from pooling. This makes clots less likely to form.

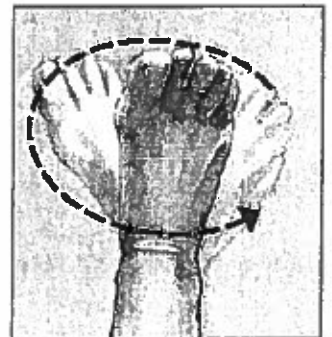
- ◆When sitting or lying down put you feet up. When you can, use pillows to raise you feet higher than the level of your heart.
- ◆Place a foam wedge between your mattress and box springs at the foot of your bed. This keeps you legs elevated above your heart at night.



## Exercise

Exercise keeps blood moving and helps prevent clots.

- ◆Do a few foot exercises every half hour to keep blood moving while you sit or stand.
- ◆When sitting or standing for long stretches of time, change your position often. If sitting, get up and move around every hour.
- ◆Ask you doctor what other kind of exercises (such as swimming or walking) is good for you.



## Compression

Elastic support stocking squeeze (compress) the legs to help improve blood flow. Your healthcare provider will prescribe these stockings for you if you need them.

- ◆Stockings are fitted to you legs. Wear them as directed.
- ◆Putting these stockings on can be hard. Ask about special tools that can help you put them on.



## Other Tips

- ◆If you smoke, try to quit. Smoking makes a DVT more likely.
- ◆Take medications as directed.
- ◆Avoid sitting with crossed legs or lying with crossed ankles.
- ◆Avoid tight clothing. (Prescription stockings are the only exception.)  
Avoid garments with tight elastic. Don't wear clothes or shoes that pinch or leave red marks.
- ◆Keep your skin clean and dry.
- ◆Inspect the skin on your legs daily for any changes.
- ◆Don't rub or massage your legs.



## When to call you Healthcare Provider

Call your healthcare provider if you notice any of these signs:

- ◆Pain, redness, or swelling in a leg.
- ◆Skin changes such as scaling, brown spots, or sores on a leg.
- ◆Sharp, stabbing pain in you side, back, or chest.
- ◆Rapid heartbeat
- ◆Shortness of breath
- ◆Fatigue
- ◆Fever over 101°F
- ◆Sweating
- ◆Sudden, unexplained cough
- ◆Bloody, coughed up mucus
- ◆Severe headache