



Weekly Safety Meeting

Prevent Blood Clots

With the holidays upon us, we will probably be traveling a lot and, of course, traveling often includes sitting for periods of time waiting in addition to driving or flying to our destinations. This can increase our chances of developing a Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT).

TVP is a type of blood clot that forms in a large vein. Part of the clot can break off and travel to places that we don't really want it to go, places like the lungs, causing a sudden blockage of arteries in the lung, known as a pulmonary embolism.

Though these types of blood clots are rare, they are very serious and can cause death. We should know what steps we can take to prevent blood clots during travel.

Blood Clot Risk Factors

According to the Centers for Disease and Control and Prevention (CDC), sitting for a long time without getting up and moving and walking around can cause or at least increase the probability of our blood to pool in the veins of our legs. This can, of course, lead to blood clots.

Underlying Conditions That Increase Risk

There are many underlying conditions that increase our chances of suffering a blood clot. You should know if you have one or more of these risk factors. Some conditions that increase your risk of developing a blood clot include:

- Having had a previous blood clot;
- Family history of blood clots;
- Known clotting disorder;
- Recent surgery, hospitalization, or injury;
- Use of estrogen-containing birth control or hormone replacement therapy;
- Current or recent pregnancy;
- Older age;
- Obesity;
- Cancer or cancer treatment such as chemotherapy; and
- Serious medical conditions (for example, congestive heart failure or inflammatory bowel disease).

Steps to Prevent Blood Clots During Travel

Increasing circulation is recommended to prevent blood clots while traveling. Remember the following:

- Stand up or walk around occasionally;
- Select an aisle seat when possible so you can walk around every 2-3 hours;
- If traveling by car, include breaks in your travel schedule to stretch and walk around;
- Exercise your calf muscles and stretch your legs while you're sitting. Try these exercises next time you travel:
 - Raise and lower your heels while keeping your toes on the floor;
 - Raise and lower your toes while keeping your heels on the floor; and
 - Tighten and release your leg muscles.
- Talk to your doctor about wearing compression stockings or taking medicine before departure if you have additional risk factors for blood clots.
- Taking aspirin to prevent blood clots when traveling is **NOT** recommended. If you take aspirin for other reasons, check with your doctor.

Recognize and Treat Blood Clots

It is helpful to know the symptoms so you can recognize if you develop blood clots.

Deep Vein Thrombosis Symptoms:

- Swelling, pain, or tenderness in the affected area (usually the leg);
- Unexplained pain or tenderness; and
- Skin that is red and warm to the touch.

Pulmonary Embolism Symptoms:

- Difficulty breathing;
- Faster than normal heartbeat;
- Chest pain that usually gets worse when you cough or breathe deeply;
- Coughing up blood; and
- Lightheadedness or fainting.

If you have symptoms, seek medical care immediately. Finding and treating these conditions early can prevent complications and death.

To diagnose a deep vein thrombosis or pulmonary embolism doctors use a variety of tests using ultrasound, CT scan, or MRI to look for clots.

Blood clots are usually treated using medicines or devices that dissolve, break up, remove, or capture the clot. Usually, medicines are taken for several weeks or months to prevent more clots from forming and to give the body a chance to dissolve or heal existing clots.

DON'T SIT STILL...BLOOD CLOTS CAN KILL!

