

Preventing Deep Vein Thrombosis

A hospital stay can mean a lot of time off your feet – and an increased risk of deep-vein thrombosis (DVT). A deep-vein thrombosis is a blood clot occurring in a deep leg vein. The leg muscles have deep veins that help carry blood from the legs to the heart. When leg muscles contract and relax, blood is squeezed up the veins toward the heart. One-way valves located along the walls of the veins help keep blood moving upward. When blood moves too slowly or not at all, it can pool in the veins. This makes a clot more likely to form. The clot may grow big enough to completely block the vein. If you are at risk for DVT, follow the suggestions on this page to help prevent it.

How to Prevent DVT

Preventing DVT means improving blood flow back to your heart. Talk to your doctor about a program of regular exercise, which can help. Elevate your legs whenever they feel swollen or heavy. Also, follow these tips:

- ▶ Get up and move as soon as you can after surgery
- ▶ Change your position often
- ▶ Exercise your lower leg muscles often to improve circulation in your legs.
 - Tighten your calves: Point your toes up toward your head and then away, repeat 10-15 times
 - Turn your ankles: Point your toe and draw a circle one way, reverse draw the other way
- ▶ Do not use pillows under your knees
- ▶ Wear compression stockings if your doctor prescribes them
- ▶ Wear loose fitting clothes, socks or hosiery
- ▶ Raise your legs 6 inches above the level of your heart from time to time
- ▶ Raise the bottom of your bed 4 to 6 inches with blocks or books
- ▶ Do not stand or sit for more than 1 hour at a time

Stay active! Staying active and moving around may help prevent blood clots.