

BLOOD CLOTS

Reducing your risk

Patient Information
www.interiorhealth.ca

HOW DO BLOOD CLOTS FORM?

Blood clots form during hospital stays for two main reasons:

1. When you are in bed, not moving around, your blood flow slows down. Sometimes this can cause blood to pool and form a clot.
2. Blood vessels can be damaged during surgery or by an injury. Clots tend to form at the damaged site.

WHY ARE BLOOD CLOTS A PROBLEM?

A blood clot that forms in a deep vein in the muscles of the leg can partly or totally block blood flow. This may lead to long-term symptoms like pain, swelling or skin ulcers.

Sometimes part of the clot can break loose and travel to the lungs. This is a potentially life-threatening condition.

Blood clots are the most preventable cause of hospital deaths!

HOW ARE BLOOD CLOTS PREVENTED?

There are three main ways to prevent blood clots: medication, mobility and mechanical devices.

Anti-clotting Medication

Anti-clotting medications (or anti-coagulants) help to prevent clot formation. However, they also increase the risk of bleeding. So, not everyone is able to take anticoagulants.

There are different anti-clotting medications available. Some are injected under the skin and others are taken as a tablet.

These medications include heparin, dalteparin (Fragmin®), enoxaparin (Lovenox®), rivaroxaban (Xarelto®), and warfarin (Coumadin®). Tell your medical care team if you already take any of these medications.

Mobility

Moving your legs keeps your blood flowing so it is less likely to form a clot. Do leg and foot exercises while in bed. Get up and walk around as soon as you are allowed to.

Mechanical Devices

If you are not able to take anti-coagulant medications, your medical team may give you a pneumatic compression device. This is a stocking that fits over the leg, which is regularly inflated and deflated by a machine. Squeezing the leg helps keep blood moving through your veins.

WHAT ARE THE RISK FACTORS?

- recent surgery
- cancer and cancer treatments
- major trauma or injuries to the leg
- heart or lung disease
- pregnancy
- use of birth control pill or hormone replacement therapy
- obesity
- smoking
- reduced mobility

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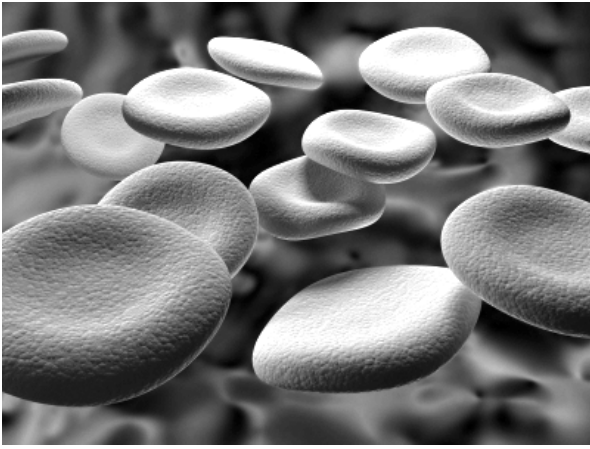


Interior Health

Healthlink BC

Dial 8-1-1

Talk to a Nurse 24 hours/day, 7 days/week
Pharmacist available between 5 p.m. - 9 a.m. daily
Dietitian between 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. - Monday to Friday
www.healthlinkbc.ca



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(continued from front)

BEFORE YOU GO TO THE HOSPITAL

If you know you are going into the hospital, you can reduce your risk by:

- asking your medical team about how they will help you prevent blood clots
- telling your medical team if you have had a blood clot before or if someone in your family has had a blood clot
- reviewing your risk factors with your medical team

WHILE YOU ARE IN THE HOSPITAL

If you are hospitalized these are some things you can do to reduce your risk:

- ask your medical team about how they will help you prevent blood clots
- expect to receive an anticoagulant injection or tablet to reduce your risk of developing blood clots
- get back to physical activity including walking as soon as your medical team allows it
- tell your medical team if you have any pain in your lungs or chest, trouble breathing, pain or swelling in a leg or if you cough up blood

AFTER YOU GO HOME

Once you go home from the hospital here are some things you can do to reduce your risk:

- continue any medications your medical team asks you to
- go to the emergency department right away if you have any pain in your lungs or chest, trouble breathing, pain or swelling in a leg or if you cough up blood

**Transformation
Through
Patient
and Family
Engagement**