Boulder Community Health

PATIENT EDUCATION

# Prevention of Venous Thromboembolism (VTE)

| Patient Information | |
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| **What is a VTE** | • A venous thromboembolism (VTE) is a blood clot. There are two main types of blood clots:<br>  ○ A deep vein thrombosis (DVT) is a blood clot in a deep vein, most often in the leg or arm.<br>  ○ A pulmonary embolism (PE) is a blood clot that has broken off from a deep vein and traveled to the lungs. A PE can be deadly.<br>• VTE kills over 100,000 people in the U.S. every year.<br>• VTE can also cause lifelong problems with your health. |
| **Causes** | Things that increase your risk of having a blood clot include:<br>• Having a previous blood clot<br>• Major surgery<br>• Trauma<br>• Obesity<br>• Having a recent stroke<br>• A family history of blood clots<br>• Increased age<br>• Smoking<br>• Being on bedrest<br>• Having varicose veins<br>• Blood diseases<br>• Pregnancy<br>• Cancer and/or chemotherapy<br>• Birth control pills or hormone replacement therapy<br>• Heart or kidney problems |
| **Signs of a blood clot** | • Some people with a blood clot don't have any signs or symptoms.<br>• People with a DVT in their arm or leg may have swelling, pain, cramping, redness, or warmth.<br>• People with a PE can have shortness of breath, pain, or coughing up blood. |
| **How to prevent blood clots** | • Your doctor will look at all the risks you have of getting a blood clot. Once your risk is determined, your doctor will order the right prevention for you. It is important that you follow the instructions your doctor gives you until you are told you can stop.<br>• The best way to prevent a blood clot from forming is to take medicines called blood thinners.<br>• You can also wear special stockings on your legs called TED hose. These help your blood flow.<br>• There is also a machine called a sequential compression device (SCD) that gently squeezes your legs or feet to keep the blood flowing. |
| **What is the risk of refusing treatment** | You could get a blood clot. If you get a blood clot:<br>• You will need to be on blood thinner medicine (injections and/or pills) for months or even your whole life.<br>• You will need to wear the TED hose to help keep your blood flowing.<br>• You might need to have a filter placed in a vein to catch the blood clot in case it breaks free. |

**For more information about blood clots talk to your doctor or nurse.** Last reviewed: 11/2025

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