

# Are You at Risk of Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT)?



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### What is DVT?

DVT is a common medical condition that occurs when a thrombus (blood clot) forms in a deep vein, usually in the leg or pelvis, causing either partially or completely blocked circulation.

### How serious is DVT?

DVT may cause lifelong disabilities with painful, swollen legs, varicose veins and ulcers.

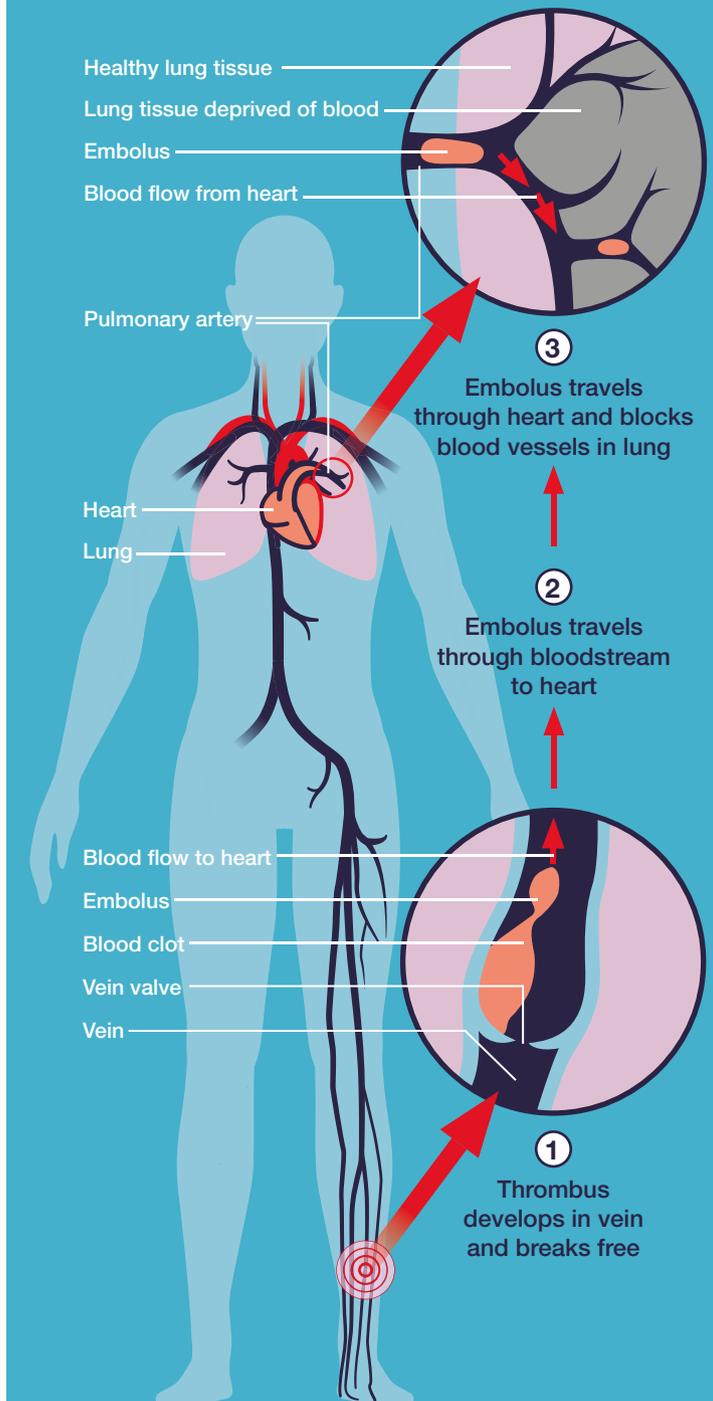
If part of the blood clot in the leg breaks off and travels to the lungs (embolus), it will cause a pulmonary embolism (PE). PE may result in breathing difficulties and may be fatal.

DVT and PE are known under the collective term of venous thromboembolism (VTE).

### How common is it?

- More people die from VTE than those who die from AIDS, breast cancer and in road traffic accidents combined
- Over 543,000 people in the European Union are estimated to die from VTE annually
- VTE is one of the most common causes of avoidable hospital deaths
- One third of surgical patients may develop DVT if no preventative measures are given

## Role of DVT in triggering PE



## Am I at risk of DVT?

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There are several factors that may increase the chances of developing DVT including:

- Age – the older you are the higher the risk
- Acute medical illness including heart failure, chronic respiratory diseases, major infections or cancer
- Major surgery including hip or knee replacements
- Immobility when you are unwell
- Pregnancy
- Taking the combined contraceptive pill (the Pill) or hormone replacement therapy
- Previous history of VTE, or with a strong family history
- Obesity

## How do I know if I have VTE?

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While many people with VTE have no obvious symptoms at all, the most common symptoms include:

- Pain, tenderness and swelling of the leg, usually in the calf
- Mild fever, with hotness in the area of the thrombosis
- Redness of the leg
- Distended veins
- Shortness of breath (dyspnoea)
- Chest pain when you breathe

## What can I do to prevent DVT developing?

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- Eat a balanced diet
- Keep a healthy weight
- Keep hydrated – drink plenty of water
- Stay mobile with plenty of leg exercise
- If confined to bed with an illness do foot exercises

## If my GP suspects that I am at risk, what treatment may be recommended?

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If your medical practitioner considers you to be at risk of DVT, preventative treatment may be given in the form of compression stockings and/or a drug to thin your blood.



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