

Orthopaedic Connection

Blood Clots - Deep Vein Thrombosis

By Thomas J. Haverbush, M.D.

Orthopaedic Surgeon

Transforming patient information into patient understanding.

Blood clots have everything to do with Orthopaedic Surgery practice because I deal with them so often. Because you hear so much about them, I decided to give you a mini course on blood clots.

You hear a lot about blood clots in airline passengers flying for more than a couple of hours. You are supposed to keep hydrated, avoid alcohol and move your legs to prevent blood clots from forming. Good advice, but it is only one of many situations that can increase your risk.

People who develop DVT are usually predisposed to quicker clotting. That fact coupled with hospitalization or surgery is much more likely to trigger a clot than an airline flight.

Clots Forming

In our Orthopaedic Surgery office I have a high index of suspicion, because I diagnose them in a wide variety of patients many of who have not even had surgery. DVT develops in the larger interior or deep veins carrying blood to the heart from the legs and pelvis. DVT may infrequently affect the arms also.

Most Prone to DVT

- Cancer patients
- Advanced age
- Nursing home patients
- A past incident of DVT
- Hormone replacement therapy or birth control pills
- Pregnancy, recent childbirth
- Family history of blood clots
- Obesity
- Hospitalization for trauma
- Fracture of a leg, hip or pelvis
- Any major surgery
- Hip or Knee replacement surgery
- Long periods of sitting on a plane or in an automobile

Hard To Recognize

Unfortunately, DVTs can develop and grow quite large before causing any symptoms. Still, almost all will exhibit signs and symptoms eventually.

These signs are:

- Swelling in one foot and ankle
- Leg pain that feels like a cramp
- Pain behind the knee or inner thigh
- Redness or warmth over the area affected
- Fever

Clot Detection

If I suspect a DVT after seeing the patient, taking a history and examining the patient I will ordinarily arrange an imaging study called a Venous Doppler Ultrasound test done in the hospital X-ray Department. (Note: amaze your friends. Christian Doppler was an Austrian Physicist who lived in the 1800s!)

The test is safe, widely available, noninvasive and accurate. Occasionally I may need further imaging scans and blood testing to aid diagnosis and therapy.

Sigh! I was afraid we couldn't get finished in one class. So - as I have had to ask so many times, can you please come back next week for part 2 of our very important course about the serious problem of blood clots?

Please remember that information about all the Orthopaedic Surgery and musculoskeletal problems I treat in the office and hospital can be found by logging onto www.orthopodsurgeon.com, our office teaching website. This can take you to Your Orthopaedic Connection for even more great information.

In the near future our website will have a whole new look that I am working on. I think you will like it.

Our goal is simple - To help people return to more pain free, functional lives.

Good health. Good life. All the best to you.

Be well.

Dr. Haverbush