



*What you need to know*  
**ABOUT DEEP VEIN  
THROMBOSIS**

 **Gilvydis Vein Clinic**  
GENEVA • SYCAMORE

# *What you need to know* **ABOUT DEEP VEIN THROMBOSIS**

## INTRODUCTION

If you haven't heard of Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT), you're not alone. According to a study supported by the American Public Health Association, 74 percent of Americans are unfamiliar with the disease or have little knowledge of the condition. However, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), it is estimated that roughly 900,000 Americans are affected by the disease each year.

In "What You Need to Know About Deep Vein Thrombosis," you'll learn what DVT is, what causes the disease, how to prevent the condition, tips for traveling with DVT, and how to treat it. Let's get started.



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## WHAT IS DEEP VEIN THROMBOSIS (DVT)?

DVT is a serious disease that occurs when a blood clot forms within a deep vein. The disease generally develops in the thigh or lower leg, however, in some cases it can form in other areas of the body, like the arm.

Symptoms of DVT, include swelling, pain, cramping, skin discoloration (pale, reddish or blueish), and abnormally warm skin near the affected area. However, according to the CDC, only half of those with the condition report experiencing any symptoms. In fact, many people don't realize they have the condition until after they have received treatment for pulmonary embolism.

In fact, it is not uncommon for DVT to lead to pulmonary embolism, which occurs when a DVT blood clot becomes disconnected from the vein wall and travels to the lungs. This often results in a blocked or partially-blocked artery in the lung, which is life-threatening. Symptoms of pulmonary embolism, include shortness of breath, rapid heartbeat, dizziness, excessive sweating, chest pain and coughing up blood - if you're experiencing these symptoms it's important to seek medical attention immediately.



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## WHAT CAUSES DVT?

As previously mentioned, DVT develops as a result of a blood clot. When this happens, the vein is blocked by the clot and unable to properly circulate blood throughout the body. A blood clot may develop as a result of the following circumstances:

### VARICOSE VEINS

A study conducted by the JAMA Network analyzed 212,984 individuals with varicose veins and 212,984 without, and concluded there is an increased risk of developing DVT for both men and women with varicose veins. Additionally, the study found that men are at a higher risk of developing DVT than women.

### GENETICS

According to the CDC, 5 to 8 percent of Americans have one of the genetic risk factors that can cause DVT. Those with at least one of the following genetic risk factors are at a higher risk of developing DVT: cancer, heart disease, antiphospholipid syndrome, infectious conditions, lung disease, inflammatory conditions and thrombophilia.

### PROLONGED SITTING DURING TRAVEL

Whether you spend a lot of time in the car or on a plane, traveling for an extended period of time can increase your risk of developing DVT. In fact, your risk increases more when flying, as your ability to get out of your seat to stretch and walk is more limited. This is especially true of flights lasting more than eight hours.



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## WHAT CAUSES DVT?

### PREGNANCY

Increased pressure on the pelvis and legs during pregnancy can cause DVT in some cases. According to the National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI), pregnant women are 5 to 10 times more likely to develop blood clots compared to non-pregnant women of the same age. If you're pregnant, talk to your doctor about DVT to find out if you're at risk.

### BEING OVERWEIGHT

Extra weight on the body puts more stress on the veins, which can cause blood clots to form.

### SMOKING

This habit has a number of harmful effects on the body that significantly increase the likelihood of developing DVT.

### HORMONES

Taking hormones, like birth control or estrogen, can increase a woman's risk of blood clots. For women, estrogen increases the likelihood of clotting. However, it's important to note that progestogen birth control pills do not have this risk.

### SURGERY OR INJURY

Certain surgeries (surgery lasting more than 90 minutes) and injuries (broken bones or muscle damage) can increase a person's chances of forming blood clots. The risk increases more if you're on bedrest or unable to walk/move for more than three days.

While DVT generally affects people over 50, it's important to remember that it can develop in anyone at any age.

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## HOW TO PREVENT DVT

Making a few lifestyle changes can significantly lower your risk of developing DVT. Consider making the following changes to your day-to-day routines:

- MAINTAIN A HEALTHY BLOOD PRESSURE
- QUIT SMOKING
- LOSE WEIGHT IF NEEDED
- WALK, MOVE AND/OR STRETCH YOUR LEGS AFTER SITTING FOR AN EXTENDED PERIOD OF TIME (MORE THAN SIX HOURS)
- TAKE MEDICATIONS AS PRESCRIBED BY YOUR DOCTOR, ESPECIALLY BLOOD THINNERS
- WEAR COMPRESSION SOCKS
- DRINK PLENTY OF WATER
- LIVE AN ACTIVE LIFESTYLE



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## TRAVELING WITH DVT

For many, the quickly approaching summer months mean it's time for summer vacation! Whether you plan on driving to your destination or flying, it's important to talk to your doctor before leaving if you think you may have DVT. In fact, it's best to schedule an appointment sooner rather than later, as you may need additional time before your trip to fill medication prescriptions.

Before you leave, you'll also want to pick up a pair of compression socks (especially if you're flying). Compression socks will not only minimize your risk of developing DVT, but they'll also prevent your legs from swelling during flight. When selecting a pair of compression socks, make sure you select a pair that fit you properly and pay special attention to the instructions, as an ill-fitting pair could actually increase your risk of forming a blood clot. If you have questions about sizing or fit, talk to your doctor or pharmacist.

### WHILE ON THE ROAD OR IN FLIGHT, KEEP THE FOLLOWING TIPS IN MIND:

- Stay hydrated
- Avoid drinking alcohol or taking sleeping medications during travel
- Walk when you can. If you're traveling by car, take a couple of extra minutes to walk around while making gas or restroom stops. For those traveling by plane, try to walk up and down the aisles when the fasten seatbelt sign is off.
- Wear loose, non-restrictive clothing
- Stretch – simply flexing or rolling your ankles while seated will help keep your blood from clotting

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## HOW IS DVT TREATED?

In order to determine the proper form of treatment, your doctor will first ask you a series of questions about your health. Your doctor will then use ultrasound vein mapping to create a picture of your veins to better understand how your blood flows. At this time, your doctor will likely be able to identify any existing clots and make a diagnosis. However, in some cases, your doctor may need to do additional blood tests to determine the full extent of the disease.

Treatment varies from patient-to-patient. In most cases, a doctor will prescribe blood thinners. The medication is designed to make it more difficult for new clots to form and to help keep existing clots from growing in size. Additionally, the medication will help prevent an existing blood clot from breaking away from the vein wall and traveling to the lungs.



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## CONCLUSION

According to the CDC, it's estimated that up to 100,000 people in the U.S. die each year as a result of DVT. If you're concerned about your risk of developing DVT or think you may already have the disease, it's important to seek treatment before it's too late. Dr. Gilvydis and his team of experts at Gilvydis Vein Clinic can help identify the presence of DVT and develop a treatment plan that's designed specifically for your needs. Schedule an appointment at either the Sycamore or Geneva office today for a vein screening.

