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## Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT)

### What is Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT)?

The blood supply of the leg is transported by arteries and veins. The arteries carry blood from the heart to the limbs; veins carry blood back to the heart. The leg contains superficial veins, which are close to the surface, and deep veins, which lie much deeper in the leg. Deep vein thrombosis (DVT) is a condition in which a blood clot (a blockage) forms in a deep vein. While these clots most commonly occur in the veins of the leg (the calf or thigh), they can also develop in other parts of the body.

DVT can be very dangerous and is considered a medical emergency. If the clot (also known as a thrombus) breaks loose and travels through the bloodstream, it can lodge in the lung. This blockage in the lung, called a pulmonary embolism, can make it difficult to breathe and may even cause death. Blood clots in the thigh are more likely to cause a pulmonary embolism than those in the calf.

### Causes of a DVT

Many factors can contribute to the formation of a DVT. The more risk factors a person has, the greater the risk of having a DVT. However, even people without these risk factors can form a DVT.

### Risk Factors for DVT

#### Blood or vein conditions:

- Previous DVT
- Varicose veins
- Blood clotting disorders
- Family history of DVT or blood clotting disorders

#### Other medical conditions:

- Heart disease
- Chronic swelling of the legs
- Obesity
- Inflammatory bowel disease
- Cancer
- Dehydration
- Sepsis

#### Women's health issues:

- Hormone replacement therapy
- Birth control pills containing estrogen
- Pregnancy or recent childbirth

#### Other:

- Over the age of 40
- Immobility (through inactivity or from wearing a cast)
- Recent surgery
- Trauma (an injury)
- Smoking

### Signs and Symptoms of a DVT in the leg

Some people with DVT in the leg have either no warning signs at all or very vague symptoms. If any of the following warning signs or symptoms are present, it is important to see a doctor for an evaluation:

- Swelling in the leg
- Pain in the calf or thigh
- Warmth and redness of the leg