

Blood clot prevention

Preventing blood clots after surgery is key to a safe recovery. Knowing the signs and taking simple steps can help protect your health as you heal.

Deep vein thrombosis (DVT):

A blood clot that forms in your veins, usually in a leg or arm.

Signs and symptoms:

- Pain or tenderness, often starting in the calf
- Swelling, warmth or redness in the foot, ankle or calf

Pulmonary embolism (PE):

A blood clot that breaks off from a vein deep in your body and travels in the blood stream to your lungs.

Signs and symptoms:

- Difficulty breathing, chest pain or coughing up blood
- Fainting, dizziness or feeling lightheaded

Both surgery and bed rest increase your risk for blood clots.

What can you do to help prevent a DVT or PE blood clot?

Everyone's medical condition is different. Your doctor may order all three of these prevention therapies. Please speak with your doctor or nurse if you have any questions.

Walk: Walking is one of the best things you can do to help prevent a blood clot. Each day, set a goal with your nurse for the number of times you will walk.

Use a compression device, if ordered by your doctor:

A compression device gently squeezes your legs while you are sitting or lying down. You need to wear the device at least 18 hours a day for it to be effective.

Take blood-thinning medication, if ordered by your doctor: Even if you are walking, your doctor may order a blood thinner due to your medical condition.

Blood clots can sometimes cause long-term problems, recur or, in rare cases, be life-threatening if not treated promptly.

Talk with your care team about your risk and ways to prevent blood clots. If you notice warning signs or have questions, speak up right away — early action matters.