



DOCTOR DISCUSSION GUIDE

Managing Deep Vein Thrombosis

A deep vein thrombosis (DVT) is a blood clot that forms in a large vein, most often in the leg or thigh. Asking the right questions during your conversation with a doctor will help you know what to expect and how to better navigate this condition. Familiarize yourself with these common terms before your appointment to help facilitate your discussion.

Vocabulary to Know

Your doctor might mention these common terms. Here's what they mean.

Thrombosis	The condition in which a blood clot develops inside a blood vessel, producing at least some obstruction to blood flow. The clot itself is called a thrombus.
Embolus (Embolism)	The condition in which a thrombus dislodges from its site of formation within a blood vessel, and travels through the circulatory system until it lodges elsewhere. When it lodges in a vessel, an embolus often shuts down blood flow, potentially causing serious organ damage.
Pulmonary Embolism	An embolus (most often originating from a DVT in a leg), lodges in a pulmonary artery, shutting off blood flow to a portion of the lungs. Depending on its size, a pulmonary embolism can cause severe shortness of breath, bleeding into the airways, or death.
D-Dimer Test	A blood test that indicates whether a blood clot is actively developing somewhere in the vascular system. In people with suspected DVT or pulmonary embolus, a normal D-dimer test provides evidence that there is no active thrombosis or embolus.
Compression Ultrasound	A non-invasive test performed at one's bedside that uses sound waves to create an image of the veins. This test can be extremely helpful in detecting a deep vein thrombosis.
Impedance Plethysmography	Another non-invasive bedside test for DVT. It uses an inflatable cuff to compress the leg veins, while measuring whether this compression changes the volume of blood in the leg. If the leg veins are already obstructed by thrombosis, inflating the cuff produces little change in leg volume.
Anti-Coagulant Medication	A family of drugs (often called "blood thinners") that impede blood clotting by inhibiting one or more of the clotting factors—the blood proteins that enable blood clotting. DVT is usually treated with one or more of these drugs.



Questions to Ask

These questions will help you start a conversation with your doctor about how to best manage deep vein thrombosis.

About Symptoms

- What symptoms should I look for that might indicate my DVT is getting worse?
- What symptoms should I look for that might indicate I am having a pulmonary embolism?
- What symptoms do you want to be notified about?
- What symptoms should cause me to call 911?

About Causes & Risk Factors

- Why do you believe I developed a DVT?
- What medical problems do I have, if any, that make a DVT more likely to happen again?
- How likely am I to develop another DVT in the future?
- Should I be worried about becoming pregnant, or using birth control or hormone replacement therapy?
- Do my weight, or my typical level of daily activity, contribute to my risk of another DVT?
- How much of a role does my smoking habit play in my risk of DVT?

About Diagnosis

- After doing non-invasive testing, how certain are you that the diagnosis of DVT is correct?
- Have you also done testing to make sure I haven't had a pulmonary embolus?

About Treatment

- Do I need initial treatment with an injectable anticoagulant, or can I begin treatment right away with pills?
- Am I a good candidate for one of the newer anticoagulant drugs that do not require frequent blood tests, or would I be better off with the older drug (Coumadin) that requires regular blood testing?
