

Splurge - Volume 7 Issue 12 (December 2012)

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DEEP VEIN THROMBOSIS

With Deep vein thrombosis (DVT) is a condition in which a blood clot (thrombus) forms in one or more of the deep veins in your body, usually in your legs. Deep vein thrombosis can cause leg pain, but often occurs without any symptoms.

Deep vein thrombosis can develop if you're sitting still for a long time, such as when traveling by plane or car, or if you have certain medical conditions that affect how your blood clots. This is a serious condition because a blood clot that has formed in your vein can break loose, travel through your bloodstream and lodge in your lungs, blocking blood flow, which can cause possible pulmonary embolism or stroke.

The symptoms of DVT typically show up as:

- swelling of the leg, including the foot and ankle
- leg pain, which may include leg or ankle, which generally starts in the calf like a cramp or charley horse
- changes in skin color, such as turning red, blue, or pale
- unusual warmth of the leg

Not all occurrences of DVT manifest symptoms, however. If you see any of these symptoms, make sure to see a doctor immediately.

How do you know if you're at risk for DVT? Most commonly these clots form when a person has been sitting for long periods of time, such as when driving or flying long distances. Normal leg circulation is restricted which can cause clots in the calves. If you've ever heard your doctor tell you to keep moving every so often on long flights, preventing DVT is most likely the reason.

Risk factors also include inherited blood-clotting disorders, prolonged bed rest (such as an extended hospital stay), pregnancy, cancer, heart failure, family history of blood clots, taking birth control pills or hormone replacement therapy, or inflammatory bowel disease. Smoking and obesity can also exacerbate the risks, so, though I say it often I'll say it again: quit smoking and get a healthy diet. So much disease can be prevented through healthy lifestyle changes.

Fortunately, the treatments for this life-threatening condition have improved considerably over the years. We generally use anticoagulants (or, 'blood thinners'). These medications decrease the blood's ability to clot. Though they don't break up existing clots, they work to prevent new clots from forming and reduce risk. Many of these are common drugs, called heparin and Coumadin. They should be taken with care to doctor's instructions, as both have serious side effects, such as increased risk of bleeding. An exciting new medication was just approved for DVT treatment called Xarelto. It shows great promise, and looks to

have fewer side effects than the other common technologies.

We also use thrombolytics, commonly referred to as ‘clotbuster’ drugs, if you have more serious types of deep vein thrombosis or pulmonary embolism. These medications are mostly used in emergency situations. If you have a history of DVT, we suggest wearing compression stockings. These are worn to the knee, and help reduce the risks for blood to pool and clot.

Finally, what can I tell you about prevention of DVT? If you are sitting for long periods of time or sedentary in general, walk around every so often and get the blood flowing. Check in with your doctor regularly, and try not to skip appointments, *especially* if something feels different or wrong. Make lifestyle changes now, not later.

Prevention and wellness are my main goal as a physician. If we can minimize risk and avoid potential disease as much as possible, the greater the longevity of my patients. When my patients enjoy their lives and are active and connected with friends and family to their fullest, those are some of my greatest joys. Embrace your life and your health. Your radiant health is the greatest gift you can give yourself this holiday season and for years to come.

Listen to Dr. Galichia’s Radio Show – “Take Your Health to Heart” every Saturday from 11 AM to Noon on 1480 KQAM in Wichita. If you have any medically related questions, please call us during the LIVE broadcast at 1-800-TALK-997 or 1-800-825-5997. You can also e-mail your questions anytime to GalichiaRadio@Galichia.com. We would love to hear from you!!!

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