

“Ten Things Patients Should Know” Series

RECOGNIZE AND PREVENT BLOOD CLOTS

1. **KNOW THE RISK FACTORS:** Having a recent surgery, age above 65, being on bed rest, using hormones, heart disease, obesity, a broken bone or a prior history of blood clots.
2. **SYMPTOMS OF BLOOD CLOTS:** Sudden pain or swelling in the arm or leg, skin that is red, warm or sore, shortness of breath or chest pain.
3. **EARLY INTERVENTION:** If you suspect a blood clot, seek medical help immediately since clots can be life-threatening emergencies.
4. **MEDICATIONS:** Take all the medications prescribed by your doctor for prevention of blood clots, including aspirin, Warfarin, Coumadin and Lovenox.
5. **LOOSE FITTING SOCKS AND CLOTHES:** Avoid knee-high stockings, socks that are tight at the ankles or shoes that may restrict blood flow.
6. **COMPRESSION STOCKINGS OR BOOTS:** These devices help minimize the odds of clots by reducing swelling in the lower legs and increasing blood flow.
7. **CHANGE POSITION OFTEN:** Do not sit or stand in the same position. Walk if advised to by your physician. Help bedridden patients turn and move their legs but do NOT place a pillow under the patient’s knees as it restricts blood flow.
8. **RAISE YOUR LEGS ABOVE YOUR HEART:** Raising your legs 6 inches above your heart several times a day can help reduce your chance of developing a clot. The foot of the bed can be raised slightly with a prop to elevate the feet.
9. **EAT LESS SALT:** Reducing sodium intake can help keep blood pressure under control and lessen the chances of having an episode of congestive heart failure (a risk factor for blood clots) – especially in patients with reduced heart function.
10. **AVOID INJURIES AND DO NOT CROSS LEGS:** Injuries, swelling of the legs and crossing the legs can restrict blood flow and increase the risk of blood clots.