

# Deep Vein Thrombosis

*This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.*

Deep vein thrombosis, or DVT, is a potentially serious risk to some long-distance travelers. DVT occurs when a blood clot forms in an arm or leg. Part of a clot may break off and travel to the lungs, which can be fatal. Fortunately, DVT may be preventable and can be treated to prevent complications.

I'm Dr. Phyllis Kozarsky with CDC's Travelers' Health Branch. Long-distance travelers may be at increased risk because they have limited mobility. The increased risk is usually associated with air travel, but DVT can also form during travel by bus, train, or car. The risk of DVT associated with long-distance travel is very small and depends on the duration of travel and other factors. Most people who develop travel-associated DVT have one or more risk factors, such as a previous blood clot, clotting disorder, recent surgery or injury, use of birth control pills or hormone replacement therapy, pregnancy, older age, obesity, cancer, or limited mobility.

If you will be sitting for an extended period during travel, take the following steps to help prevent DVT:

- Get up occasionally and walk around.
- Exercise your calf muscles and stretch your legs while you're sitting.
- And select an aisle seat, when possible.

We currently recommend that most travelers not use aspirin or blood-thinning medicine to prevent DVT. Long-distance travelers with additional risk factors for DVT should talk to their doctor about extra precautions, such as wearing special stockings or taking blood thinners.

The most common symptoms of DVT are swelling, pain, and tenderness in the affected part of the body, usually the leg. Other symptoms include redness and increased warmth of the skin. If you develop these symptoms, seek medical attention. If a clot travels to the lungs, symptoms could include unexplained shortness of breath; faster than normal or irregular heartbeat; chest pain; cough, which may be bloody; and lightheadedness or fainting. If you develop these symptoms seek *immediate* medical care.

CDC is conducting research to learn more about risk factors and improve the diagnosis and treatment of DVT by funding the Thrombosis and Hemostasis Centers Research and Prevention Network. CDC also funds health promotion and wellness initiatives to give people information about how to prevent DVT and its complications.

For more information on DVT, visit [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) and select "Deep Vein Thrombosis" from the A to Z list. For more information on travelers' health, visit [www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel).

*For the most accurate health information, visit [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.*