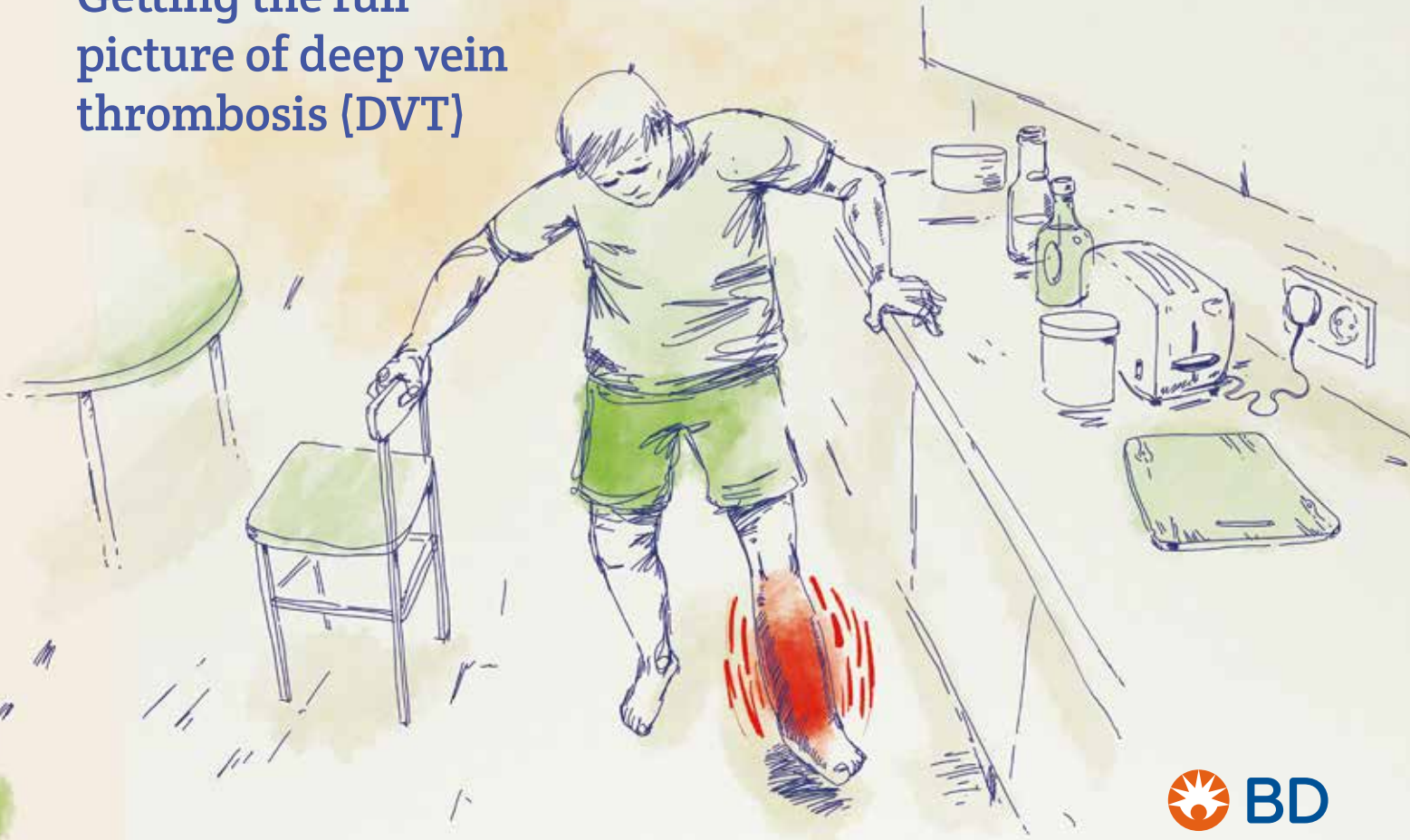


Getting the full picture of deep vein thrombosis (DVT)



Know your DVT

Taking control and getting the right treatment

Deep vein thrombosis (DVT) is a serious disease. Therefore, it is essential that you can recognise the potential signs and symptoms and understand the risk factors that might predispose you to the condition.

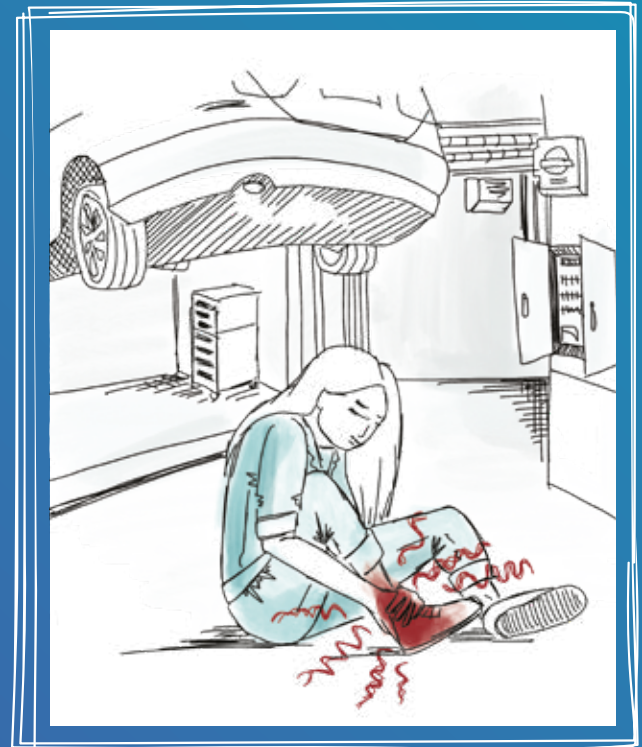
This will enable you to take whatever steps necessary to prevent a DVT and avoid the potential complications.

Blood clots: 'two sides of a coin'

Blood has an important job: it must flow continuously and smoothly throughout your body for an entire lifetime. One of the key functions of blood is the process of clotting.

Blood clots are potentially lifesaving when they stop you from bleeding after an injury. Too much clotting of blood can be dangerous as this can cause partial or complete blockage within a vein. This is what happens when you have a DVT.

When a DVT forms, it reduces blood flow through the vein, causing swelling and pain in the area. Left untreated, they become dangerous and can be fatal.



Causes of DVT

Understand how blood clots cause a DVT



Blood flows freely through healthy veins towards the heart.



A blood clot begins to form in a blood vessel. The clot forms a blockage or plug that obstructs a blood vessel.



Sometimes a small lump of the clot breaks away (this free-floating lump is then called an 'embolus') and travels through the bloodstream.

An embolus can occur when a DVT is left untreated. The embolus can then move from its original site in a leg vein and travel via the heart into an artery in the lung(s).

A blood clot in the lungs is called a **pulmonary embolism** or just simply **PE**. This requires urgent medical attention as it can often cause serious life-threatening complications. It is important to identify whether you have a PE as early as possible.

DVT and PE are therefore closely connected, and together are known as venous thromboembolism or VTE - a potentially deadly medical condition.

Risk factors for DVT

Understand how to reduce your risk of developing a DVT

When it comes to blood clots, everyone has some degree of risk; however, it can help to know how you can reduce your risk by being aware of the following risk factors for DVT:

Hospitalisation and surgery

- Half of all blood clots occur during or soon after a hospital stay or surgery.

Being immobile

- Not moving for extended periods of time (for example, during bed rest or a long-haul flight).

Family history

- A family history of blood clots or an inherited condition can increase clotting risk.

Trauma

- A recent fracture or severe muscle injury.

Chronic medical conditions

- Such as cancer, lung diseases or obesity.

Age

- Anybody can get a blood clot, but the risk increases with age.

Increased oestrogen

- Often caused by birth control pills, hormone replacement therapy or pregnancy.

Medicines

- Certain medications can increase the risk of developing a blood clot.

Lifestyle factors

- Smoking and obesity can also increase the risk of developing a blood clot.

In people who have multiple risk factors, their risk is increased even further.

If you think you may be at risk, speak to your doctor, and make sure they are aware of all the medications you are taking and any family history.

Symptoms of a DVT or PE

How to recognise a blood clot-related event like a DVT or PE

It is important to be aware of the symptoms of blood clots, which can vary depending upon the location of the clot.



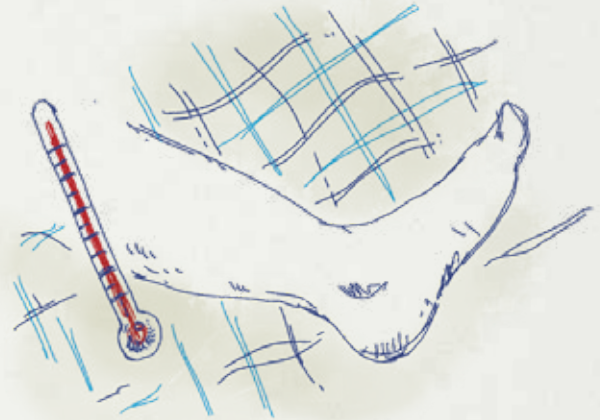
When a blood clot forms in one of the veins in your leg, it could be a DVT.

- You may experience sudden or gradual pain, pain on walking, swelling, tension in the leg, tenderness and warmth.



When a blood clot from a vein in your leg lodges in an artery in your lung, it could be a PE.

- You may experience sharp chest pain, a fast or irregular heartbeat, shortness of breath, sweating, fever or coughing up blood.



If you learn to recognise the warning signs, you're more likely to get quick medical help that can make a huge difference in keeping you out of the danger zone.

Complications of VTE

Complications arising from venous thromboembolism (VTE)



1 in 3 people who have a blood clot will have another episode within 10 years



1 in 4 people who have a PE may die without having experienced any symptoms beforehand

A long-term complication of VTE is **post-thrombotic syndrome** or **PTS**, which is a condition where there are ongoing symptoms of a blood clot, or DVT, in the leg.

While some people may recover fully, others may still experience symptoms over the next few months or even years, often an indication that the affected vein(s) may be permanently damaged.



As many as 70% of healthcare-associated blood clots can be avoided



Fewer than 50% of hospital patients receive appropriate preventative treatment

Prevention is key: speak to your doctor to find out if you are 'at risk'. You may be given appropriate treatment to prevent the DVT from ever forming in the first place.

Treatment options

How are DVT and PE treated?

The main goals of treatment are to stop existing clots from getting bigger, as well as preventing more clots from forming in the future.

Some common treatments include:

Anticoagulants – medicine that thins the blood and prevents clots from forming

Thrombolytics – medicine that dissolves blood clots after they have formed

Surgery and other procedures

Sometimes having surgery or a small procedure is the best option. For example, when a blood clot is difficult to treat with conventional medicines or if you are unable to take the necessary medications. Some of these options are outlined below:

Thrombectomy – surgical removal of a clot

Stent – metal scaffolds that are inserted in an interventional procedure that support and help keep the vein open.

Angioplasty* – a nonsurgical treatment for DVT whereby a balloon catheter (using a 'dilatation catheter') is inserted into the vein to widen it after the blood clot has been dissolved

**Because the procedure is in the vein, this is more accurately known as 'venoplasty' or 'venous angioplasty'*

Inferior vena cava filters – a special filter that can prevent blood clots in the veins of the legs from entering the heart and moving on to the lungs

Compression socks – they apply pressure to your lower legs, helping to maintain blood flow and to reduce discomfort and swelling.

Speak to your doctor if you are receiving treatment for a blood clot-related medical condition. They will help explain the different treatment options and which ones are best for you.

Find out more



Visit www.thrombosisdiaries.com

If you are experiencing symptoms and suspect you may have a blood clot, see a doctor immediately, preferably at a hospital or clinic that specialises in these conditions.

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