



spotlight on health

Talking Blood Clots With Your Doc

(NAPSA)—Blood clots can be a serious concern for those who have had a harmful clot in the past. If you have a history of certain types of blood clots, you have a higher chance of getting another blood clot. Understanding your risk of recurrence is important. Talking with your doctor can better help you get on the right path to preventing harmful clots.

Clots normally form to help stop bleeding after you've been injured. Clots that form for other reasons, like those outlined below, can be dangerous. Many potentially serious clots originate in a vein in your leg or pelvis. They can cause serious swelling in the legs or block blood flow in the lungs.

About half the people who develop abnormal blood clots have an inherited tendency to do so. Other factors that may cause harmful clots to form include, but are not limited to:

- **Surgery:** operations are one of the leading causes of blood clots. Especially operations to replace major joints such as the hip and knee.

- **Long periods of inactivity:** inactivity caused by prolonged bed rest or long trips increases your chances of developing a blood clot. Patients immobilized after surgery are more likely to develop clots than those who are able to get up and walk around.

- **Certain medical conditions:** for example, people who have had cancer, a heart attack or stroke are more likely to develop clots in their veins.

- **Vein injury:** this may occur during certain types of surgery, especially hip or knee replacement



If you have had a blood clot in the past, your doctor may prescribe an over-the-counter drug such as aspirin.

surgery. It may also be a result of direct injuries to the legs.

- **Increased levels of clotting factors in the blood:** some types of cancer cause increased levels of blood clotting substances. Also, the female hormone estrogen, which is found in birth control pills and hormone therapy, increases clotting factors in the blood.

If any of these factors apply to you, be sure to talk to your doctor. Your doctor may recommend prevention and treatment options based on your medical history and current risk factors. She may prescribe an over-the-counter drug such as low-dose aspirin. Aspirin interferes with the blood's ability to clot. Stronger medicines, known as blood thinners or anticoagulants, may also be prescribed. There are also benefits of staying active.

Talking blood clots with your doctor should be an open dialogue—one in which all of your concerns are addressed. Take charge of your health today!

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Sources: Mayo Clinic; Circulation (Journal of the American Heart Association); The Lancet