

# HEALTHY INSIDE

## Getting a leg up on health: Cancer Creates a Risk for **Blood Clots**

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**THROMBOSIS IS THE SECOND-LEADING CAUSE OF DEATH** in patients with cancer. Breast Cancer increases the risk of Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT), usually in the legs. Aggressive preventive care and an attitude that doesn't accept defeat will help you avoid this complication.

### WHAT PUTS YOU AT INCREASED RISK?

- Chemotherapy.
- Being on hormonal therapy, most often Tamoxifen, increases the risk of DVT (usually in the legs).
- Having a medical history of DVT, stillbirths, or family history of DVT
- Aged 55 or older.
- A body mass index greater or equal to 25 kg/lb (overweight).
- Elevated Blood Pressure.
- Total cholesterol greater or equal to 250
- Smoking or a family history of coronary heart disease (CHD).
- Surgery or any immobilization.
- Having varicose veins especially with leg swelling.

If you have any of these situations and experience new or increased swelling or leg pain, contact your doctor.

Chemotherapy by itself, but particularly with hormonal therapy, increases the risk especially with age. Unfortunately thromboprophylaxis (medicine to avoid clots) has not demonstrated a consistent benefit, may be very expensive and has its own risks.

### PREVENTIVE CARE:

- Exercise on a daily basis, whether on land or in a pool. The chances of a clot are decreased and the production of the body's anti-clot substances are increased along with your cancer-fighting ability.
- Keep well nourished and drink water! Proper nutrition and hydration are essential for keeping the blood from "thickening" (dehydration) and giving the body the nutrients necessary to produce anti-clot proteins (thrombolysis), and nourishing the immune system. If solids are difficult because of nausea, frequent liquid feedings with protein-rich drinks can be beneficial.
- Avoid constricting garments like girdles, spanx, etc. especially in jobs that entail prolonged sitting. Legs should not be crossed for long periods, feet should be flexed frequently and short walking breaks taken hourly.
- Graduated compression stockings (worn to the knee) will help the calf-pump function more effectively especially in those with varicose veins or ankle swelling and those who are overweight. Compression should be considered when traveling, especially when confined and immobile.
- Avoid high heels (other than for short periods) to promote better venous flow.
- While one can never be completely

confident that clots won't form, a conscientious and aggressive plan of daily exercise will help avoid clots in over 90 percent of cases. In the spirit of Susan G. Komen and Pink October, keep active and carry the torch to conquer cancer — don't just survive!

