
Part 4: Maternal VTE Patient Education Handout

BE AWARE!

Do you know the signs and symptoms of Blood Clots in Pregnancy or After Having a Baby?

All pregnant and postpartum women are at higher risk for blood clots.

Blood clots in pregnant women usually form in the deep veins of the legs or in the pelvic area. This condition is known as deep vein thrombosis (DVT). These blood clots can break off and move to different parts of your body like the lungs or brain, and be life-threatening to you or your baby.

What symptoms do I need to watch for during my pregnancy and up to six weeks after my baby is born?

- Extreme swelling in your leg (or arm), especially in your calf and thigh
- Leg pain, tenderness, or persistent cramping
- Leg (or arm) warmer to the touch than other parts of the body
- Redness or bluish skin discoloration
- Severe shortness of breath
- Persistent or increasing headache and/or vision problems
- Irregular heartbeat or chest pains
- Fainting or feeling anxious
- Coughing up blood

What should I do if I have any of these symptoms and they don't go away?

IMMEDIATELY contact your obstetrician, midwife, family medicine doctor or your primary care provider

- Describe your symptoms clearly and explain how sick you feel, including any feelings of anxiety or dread
- If your symptoms occur postpartum, be sure to tell the provider you recently had a baby
- If your provider says your symptoms are normal, ask what symptoms should cause you to call or come back

When should I seek EMERGENCY MEDICAL CARE?

- If you have severe shortness of breath or feel extremely sick.
- If you are very sick and there isn't someone to drive you, call 9-1-1.
- If you are pregnant, make every effort to go to a hospital where there is obstetric (OB) care.

What are my risk factors for developing a blood clot in pregnancy or after having a baby?

ANY WOMAN CAN DEVELOP BLOOD CLOTS IN PREGNANCY OR POSTPARTUM BUT YOU ARE AT HIGHER RISK IF YOU:

- Have a personal or family history of blood clots
- Have a thrombophilia (blood clotting disorder)
- Smoke
- Are overweight
- Sit or lie still for long periods of time due to bed rest or long car or air travel
- Are over 35 years old
- Have a cesarean delivery of your baby
- Take estrogen containing oral contraceptives
- Have any combination of the above risk factors

BOTTOM LINE: LISTEN TO YOUR BODY

- Trust your instincts when you feel something is wrong
- When you see a health care provider, bring your partner, friend or family member who can support you and help explain that these symptoms are not normal for you
- It's ok to get a second opinion if you don't feel listened to or your symptoms are not taken seriously

Get online support and information

- The Shane Foundation
 - <http://www.shanefoundation.org/>
- National Blood Clot Alliance (NBCA)
 - <https://www.stopthecлот.org/>
 - <https://womenandbloodclots.org/pregnancy-and-post-childbirth/>
- American Society of Hematology
 - www.hematology.org/patients/clots/pregnancy.aspx
- Foundation of Women and Girls with Blood Disorders
 - <http://www.fwgbd.org/>