What to know about blood clots

Healthy blood is designed to clot. When blood clots, it prevents heavy bleeding. But, if a clot happens inside a vein, it can be dangerous. This is called a deep vein thrombosis (DVT). Sometimes, the blood clot may move through the body and get stuck in the lungs. This is called a pulmonary embolism (PE).

Up to 100,000 Americans die from a DVT or PE every year. These clots kill more people than breast cancer, car collisions, and HIV/AIDS combined.

Blood Clot Forming

SIGNS OF A CLOT

Signs of a DVT or PE include:

- Swelling, tenderness, redness or warmth in one area of the body
- Chest heaviness or pain
- Sweating
- Feeling out of breath
- Weakness or fainting
- Fast heart beat
- Feeling of impending doom

KNOW YOUR RISK

Certain things make you more likely to get a blood clot. They include:

- Recent surgery or an injury
- Being in bed for long periods
- Not moving a certain body part, such as a broken leg
- Sitting for a long time, including during travel
- Higher levels of estrogen from birth control pills, pregnancy or hormone replacement therapy
- Medical conditions, such as cancer, Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis, heart disease, blood clotting disorders or lung disease
- Obesity
- Smoking
- History of atrial fibrillation (A-fib)
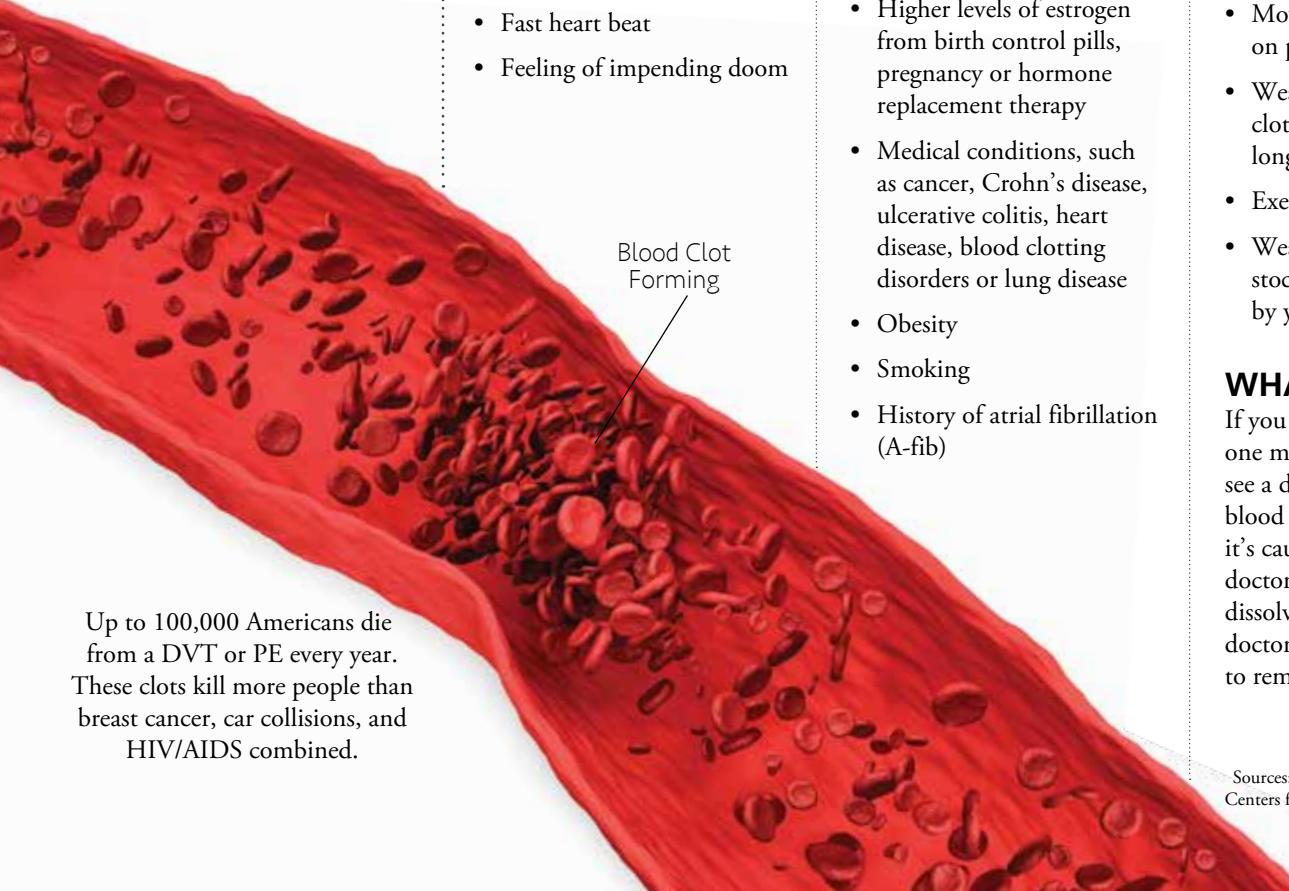
REDUCE YOUR RISK

Talk about your risk with your doctor.

You can lower your risk of getting a blood clot by:

- Getting up from sitting at least every two hours
- Moving around after surgery or being in bed for a long time
- Moving legs and feet while on plane trips
- Wearing loose-fitting clothes while sitting for a long time
- Exercising regularly
- Wearing compression stockings if recommended by your doctor

WHAT TO DO?

If you think you or a loved one might have a blood clot, see a doctor right away. A blood clot can be treated if it's caught early. Sometimes, doctors use medicines that dissolve the clot. Other times, doctors will perform surgery to remove the clot.

Sources: American Society of Hematology, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention