

Avoiding Air Travel Thrombosis (ATT):

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check for updates before you travel:

- Don't wear anything that impedes circulation (like a knee brace).
- Risk increases with time in the air. A flight of less than two hours may be safe unless it follows another flight or if you spend hours waiting to take off.
- Frequent flexing, at ten or fifteen minute intervals, helps prevent clots. The more risk factors you have, the more frequently you need to flex.
 1. With your feet flat on the floor push down with the balls of your feet, lifting your heels. Then, with your heels back on the floor, lift the balls of your feet from the floor. Deliberately but not strenuously. Repeat 10-12 times. If there is room, do this with legs extended.
 2. Exercise thigh muscles by sliding feet forward and back on the floor.
- Sleeping is dangerous unless you can count on being awakened to flex. If there is room, lie with your legs up at the same level as your heart.
- Avoid sitting with your legs crossed for more than a few minutes.
- Massaging the leg muscles could be dangerous if a clot has formed. If one lower leg has become swollen, don't massage it.
- If you are at heightened risk for blood clots, talk to your doctor about

possibly taking anticoagulants and/or wearing medical compression hose. The biggest risk factor is fitness, especially if you have a low resting pulse. Other risk factors include recent injury (including sprain or bruise, especially of the lower limbs or torso), recent surgery, a personal or family history of blood clots, cancer, obesity, smoking, diabetes, heart disease, women who are pregnant or taking estrogen (including birth control pills), and age.

If you are stricken, it will probably be a few days or more after the flight. If you feel symptoms listed below, you need to see a doctor. A few days after the flight you will probably forget exactly what symptoms to watch for, so keep this leaflet with you. After 30 days you are probably safe, but avoid surgery for 3 months.

ATT symptoms to watch for up to 30 days after air travel.

Leg symptoms, during or after flight:

- Swelling in one lower leg. (A little swelling in both legs is normal in flight.)
- Cramp or tenderness in one lower leg.
- Swelling or bruising behind knee.

Chest symptoms usually appear 2-4 days or more after the initial clot in the calf, which you may not have noticed:

- shortness of breath
- rapid breathing, panting
- cramp in your side, painful breathing
- chest pain radiating to the shoulder
- fever
- coughing up blood
- fainting (often the first sign, especially in older people)

Tell the doctor that you have flown recently and that you suspect a blood clot.

Tips to avoid misdiagnosis:

Most victims fail to get correct diagnosis and treatment until after the clot has done permanent damage. To avoid this:

If you have leg symptoms but the doctor tells you it is only a strained muscle, insist on an ultrasound leg scan. Without it, the chance of correct diagnosis is only 50/50. If you have to pay for it yourself, the cost is around \$150, not much if it helps avoid permanent damage to the veins and chronic phlebitis.

If you have chest symptoms but the doctor tells you it is a cold, pneumonia, heartburn, or other conditions, ask for a blood oxygen test. A small device called a pulse oximeter is clipped to your finger and measures blood oxygen without breaking the skin. If the reading is below 80 and there is no reason (such as emphysema) for low oxygen, the doctor will then want to do a ventilation/perfusion test, which will confirm or rule out PE.

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