Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT)

People with spinal cord injury (SCI) are at particular risk for deep vein thrombosis (DVT) during their acute hospital course. Deep vein thrombosis is a blood clot that forms in a vein deep in the body, most often in the lower leg or thigh. This can result in a life-threatening danger if the clot breaks loose from the leg vein and finds its way to the lung, causing a pulmonary embolism.

Doctors use anticoagulants, commonly called blood thinners, to prevent blood clots. In spinal cord injury, anticoagulants are generally given with the first 72 hours after injury to all patients. The thinners are usually given for about eight weeks. The most common type of blood thinner used in SCI is a low molecular weight heparin such as enoxoparin

or dalteparin. These medications slow the time it takes for blood to clot and also prevent growth of a clot. Blood thinners do not remove existing clots; that sometimes involves surgery.

Some SCI centers use a type of blood filter called an inferior vena cava (IVC) filter in people at high risk for thromboembolism – including those with high cervical injuries or long bone fractures. The appropriateness of IVC filter use as a preventative has not been fully worked out. A recent study showed that placement of an IVC filter may actually increase risk of DVT.

The risk for DVT is highest in the acute phase of SCI but some risk for blood clot formation remains in the SCI population. Routine use of graduated compression stockings is common in people with paralysis.

Source: National Heart Lung and Blood Institute, Paralysis Resource Guide 2013

Websites

Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation: Deep Vein Thrombosis wallet cards
www.ChristopherReeve.org/cards

Free, laminated DVT wallet cards may be ordered from the Reeve Foundation. You may call us toll-free 800-539-7309 x7224. Feel free to share the information on the card with your medical team as it was developed with the help of a physician at the Kennedy Krieger Institute and a spinal cord injury nurse at Maryville University.

National Blood Clot Alliance
http://www.stoptheclot.org
267 Kentlands Blvd., Suite 2025
Gaithersburg, MD 20878
Phone: 703-935-8845; 877-4NO- CLOT (toll-free)
Email: info@stoptheclot.org
A patient advocacy group that promotes awareness of risk, prevention and treatment of blood clots.

Vascular Cures: Deep Vein Thrombosis
www.vascularcures.org
www.vascularcures.org/deep-vein-thrombosis-dvt
274 Redwood Shores Parkway #717
Redwood City, CA 94065
Phone: 650-368-6022
Email: info@vascularcure.org
A non-profit organization which provides information and educational resources to patients of vascular disease.

MedlinePlus: Deep Vein Thrombosis
http://www.medlineplus.gov/deepveinthrombosis.html

National Heart Lung and Blood Institute: What Is Deep Vein Thrombosis?
http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topics/dvt/

Society of Interventional Radiology: Venous Disease
https://www.sirweb.org/patient-center/conditions-and-treatments/venous-disease/#DVT
Includes info on DVT

UCLA Interventional Radiology: Deep Venous Thrombosis (DVT)
www.radiology.ucla.edu/dvt

University of Miami: Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT)
http://surgery.med.miami.edu/vascular-and-endovascular/patient-care-services/dvt

Craig Hospital: Blood Clots and DVTs Resources
https://craighospital.org/resources/topics/blood-clots-dvts

Terms to search if you wish to research this area further: DVT, Deep Vein Thrombosis, Deep Venous Thrombosis, Thromboembolism, Greenfield filter, Intravascular Filters, Vena Caval Filters

Articles

- Davidson, Bruce L. “Controversies in Pulmonary Embolism and Deep Venous Thrombosis.” *American Family Physician*. November 1, 1999. The article can be accessed online at https://www.aafp.org/afp/1999/1101/p1969.html.

- Chen, David. “Treatment and Prevention of Thromboembolism After Spinal Cord Injury.” *Topics in Spinal Cord Injury Rehabilitation*. Vol. 9, No. 1: Summer 2003, pp. 14-25.

- Vogel, Bob. “Deep Vein Thrombosis,” New Mobility July 2013 pages 46-47.

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