

# Your Guide to Preventing and Treating Blood Clots



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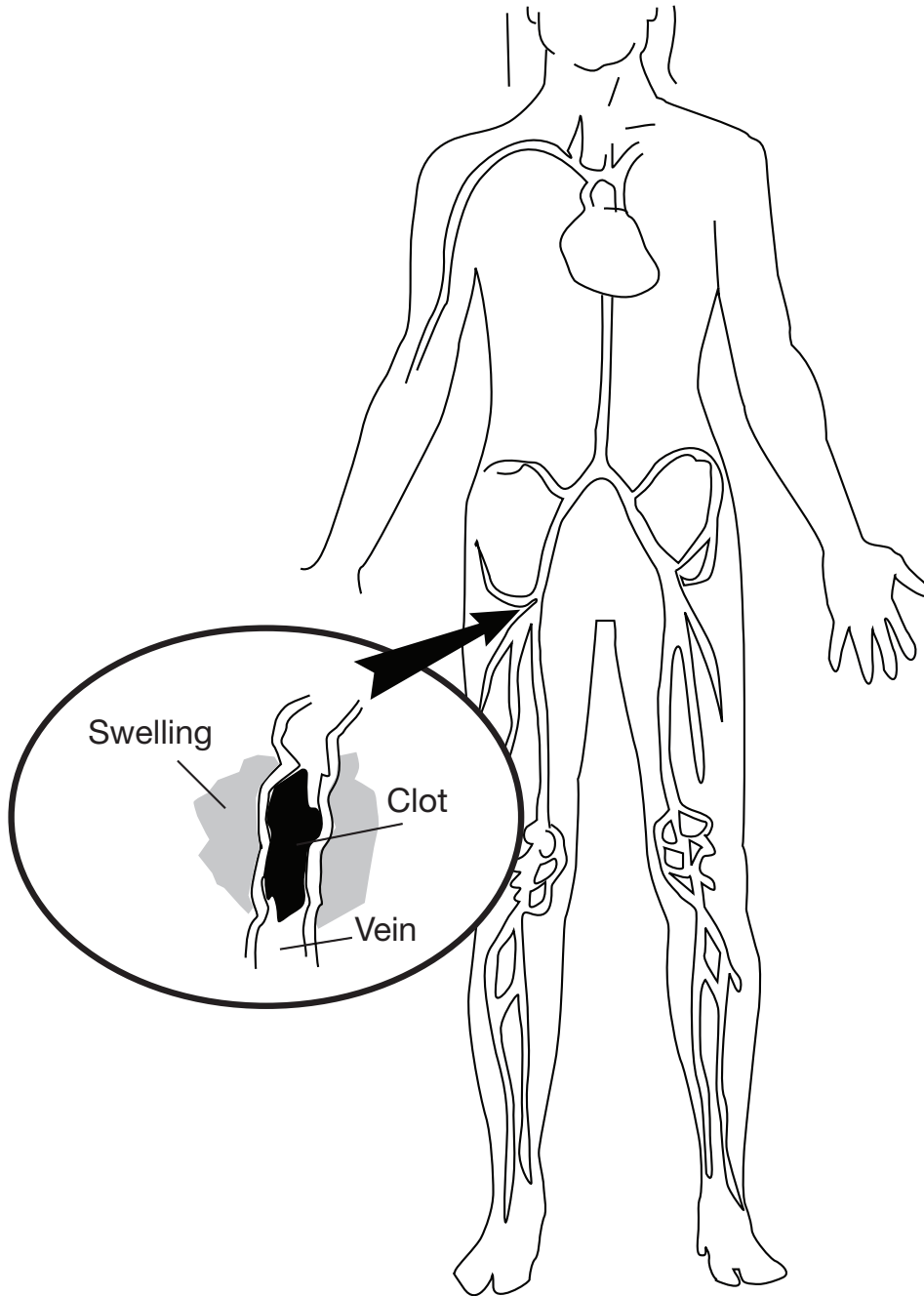
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Blood clots can form in any deep veins of the body. Most often, they form in the legs, arms, or groin.

## Introduction

Blood clots (also called deep vein thrombosis [throm-BO-sis]) most often occur in people who can't move around well or who have had recent surgery or an injury. Blood clots are serious. It is important to know the signs and get treated right away. This booklet tells about ways to prevent and treat blood clots.



### Reminders:

- Call your doctor\* if you have questions.
- Your doctor's phone number is:

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## Causes of Blood Clots

Blood clots can form if you don't move around a lot. You may also get a blood clot if you:

- Have had recent surgery.
- Are 65 or older.
- Take hormones, especially for birth control. (Ask your doctor about this).
- Have had cancer or are being treated for it.
- Have broken a bone (hip, pelvis, or leg).
- Have a bad bump or bruise.
- Are obese.
- Are confined to bed or a chair much of the time.
- Have had a stroke or are paralyzed.

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\*In this booklet, the term "doctor" is used. It can mean doctor, nurse, physician's assistant, nurse practitioner, pharmacist, or other health care professional.

- Have a special port the doctor put in your body to give you medicine.
- Have varicose (VAR-e-kos) or bad veins.
- Have heart trouble.
- Have had a blood clot before.
- Have a family member who has had a blood clot.
- Have taken a long trip (more than an hour) in a car, airplane, bus, or train.

### Are you at risk?

- Some people are more likely to get blood clots. Talk with your doctor to see if you are at risk.

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## Symptoms of a Blood Clot

You may have a blood clot if you see or feel:

- New swelling in your arm or leg.
- Skin redness.
- Soreness or pain in your arm or leg.
- A warm spot on your leg.

### Important!

- If you think you have a blood clot, call your doctor or go to the emergency room right away!



**Blood clots can be dangerous.** Blood clots that form in the veins in your legs, arms, and groin can break loose and move to other parts of your body, including your lungs. A blood clot in your lungs is called a pulmonary embolism (POOL-mo-nar-e EM-bo-liz-em). If this happens, your life can be in danger. Go to the emergency room or call 911.

A blood clot may have gone to your lungs if you suddenly have:

- A hard time breathing.
- Chest pain.
- A fast heartbeat.
- Fainting spells.
- A mild fever.
- A cough, with or without blood.



## Preventing Blood Clots

You can help prevent blood clots if you:

- Wear loose-fitting clothes, socks, or stockings.
- Raise your legs 6 inches above your heart from time to time.
- Wear special stockings (called compression stockings) if your doctor prescribes them.
- Do exercises your doctor gives you.
- Change your position often, especially during a long trip.
- Do not stand or sit for more than 1 hour at a time.
- Eat less salt.
- Try not to bump or hurt your legs and try not to cross them.
- Do not use pillows under your knees.
- Raise the bottom of your bed 4 to 6 inches with blocks or books.
- Take all medicines the doctor prescribes you.



## Stay active!

- Staying active and moving around may help prevent blood clots.



## Treatment for Blood Clots

If you have been told you have a blood clot, your doctor may give you medicine to treat it. This type of medicine is called a blood thinner (also called an anticoagulant [an-te-ko-AG-u-lent]). In most cases, your doctor will tell you to follow this treatment plan:

- For the first week you will receive medicine called heparin (HEP-a-rin) that works quickly. This medicine is injected under the skin. You will learn how to give yourself these shots, or a family member or friend may do it for you.
- You will also start taking Coumadin<sup>®</sup> (COO-ma-din)—generic name: warfarin (WAR-far-in)—pills by mouth.
- After about a week of taking both the shots and the pills, you will stop taking the shots.
- You will continue to take the Coumadin<sup>®</sup>/warfarin pills for about 3 to 6 months or longer.



## Side Effects of Blood Thinners

Blood thinners can cause side effects. Bleeding is the most common problem. Your doctor will watch you closely. If you notice something wrong that you think may be caused by your medication, call your doctor.

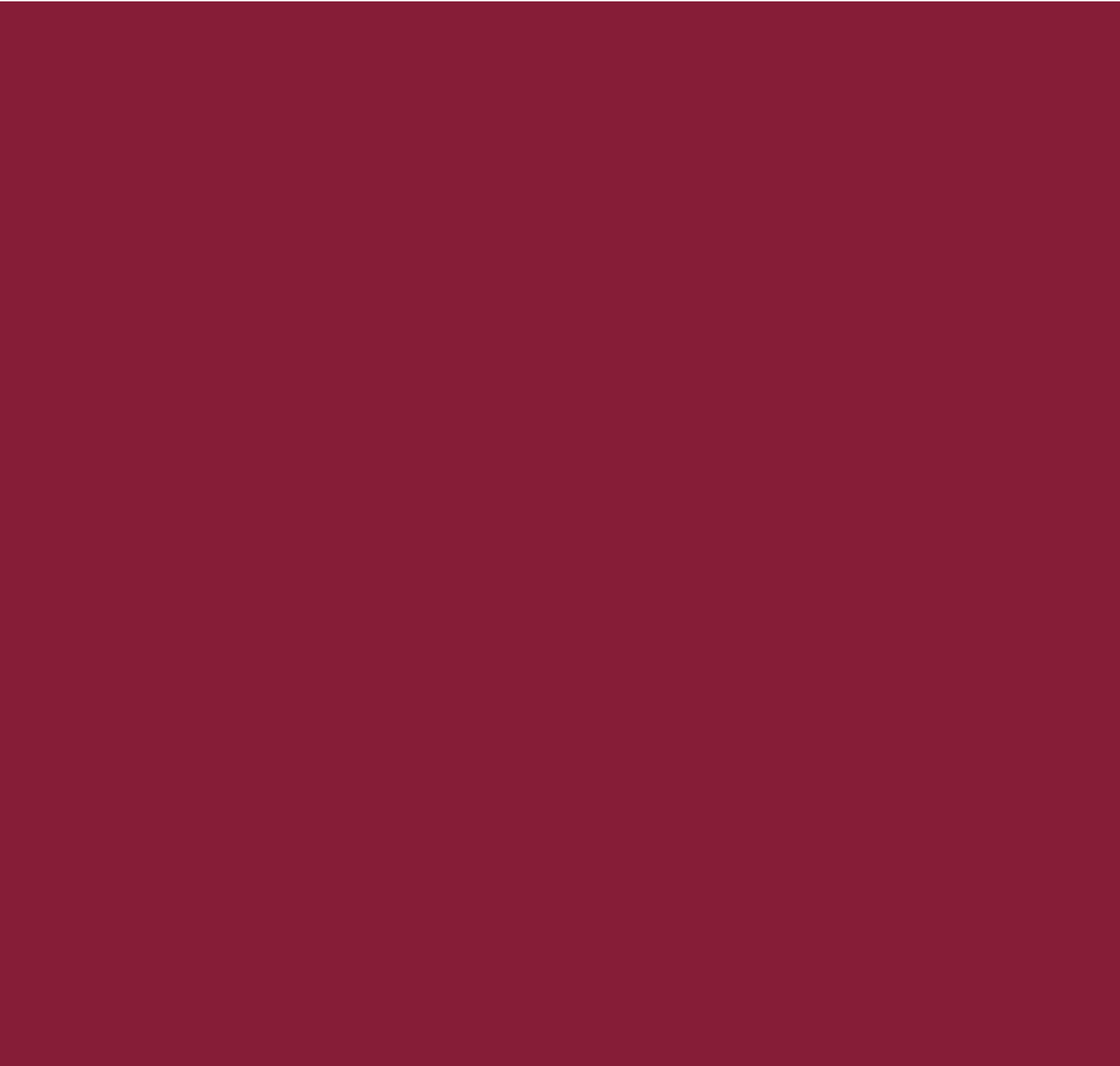
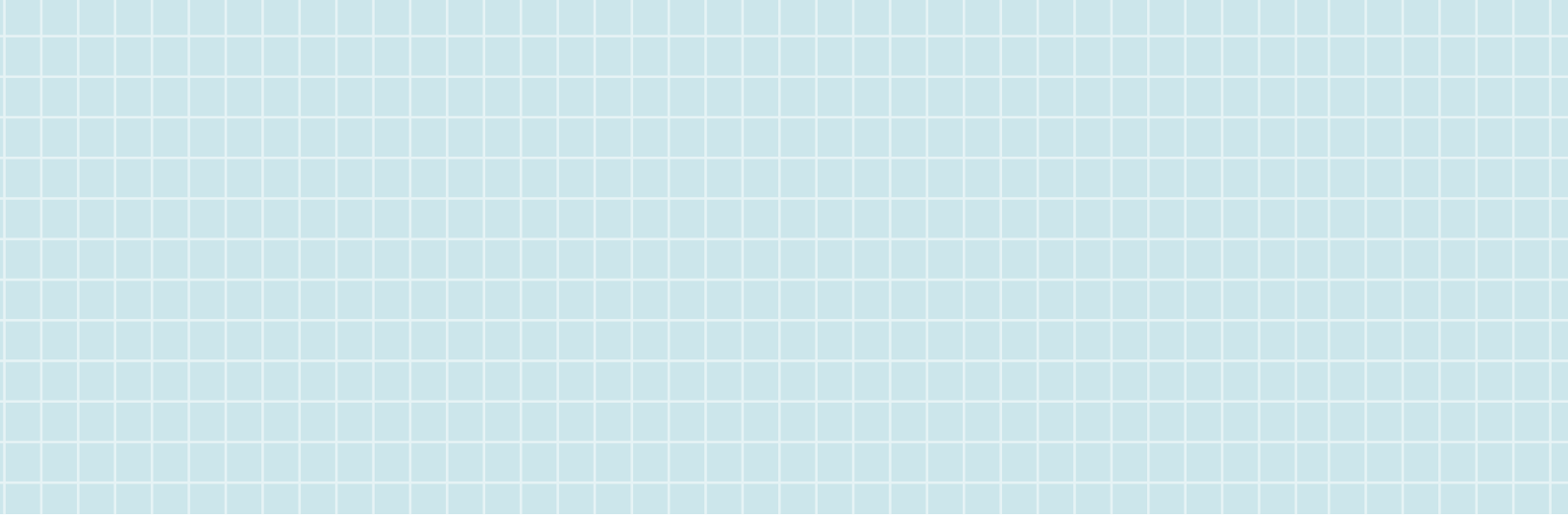
### Are you bleeding too much?

- If you think you are bleeding too much, call your doctor or go to the nearest emergency room. Tell them you are being treated for blood clots. Tell them the medicines you are taking.

## List of Terms

Term	Meaning
Anticoagulant	Medicine that thins your blood
Blood clot	Blood that clumps together
Blood thinner	Another name for medicine that prevents blood from clotting
Coumadin <sup>®</sup> /warfarin, heparin	Types of medicines that keep blood from clotting
Deep vein thrombosis	A blood clot that forms in the veins of the legs, arms, or groin
Pulmonary embolism	A blood clot that has traveled to your lungs
Varicose veins	Enlarged veins, often found in your legs





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