

Blood clots and DVT's

You have probably heard of some one who has had blood clots in their legs or some one who has had blood clots in their lungs. Clots in the lungs, also called a pulmonary embolism, or PE for short, are the result of blood clots forming at some part of the body that then break loose from where they are made and they pass through the body, through the heart and end up getting caught in the lungs.

They get caught in the lungs since the blood vessels get very small. The problem with clots reaching the lungs is that blood cannot get past where this clot has caught, so the blood cannot get the oxygen that it needs to pick up to take back to the body.

How bad the clots are in the lungs depends on their size and where they become trapped. If one small clot makes its way to the lungs, there may not be much of an effect and the person may not even realize that anything has happened. However, if a large clot ends up in the lungs, or if several smaller clots plug up a larger part of the lungs, then the symptoms can be very severe, and the person may even die from the clots.

Clots form in the body for many different reasons. To understand what happens, I will briefly explain what is going on with the blood to cause clots. Clots are needed to stop bleeding when it occurs. The way that clots form is a complicated chain of events. In the blood there are red and white blood cells, and much smaller things called platelets.

Additionally, there are a number of different proteins and molecules in the blood that float around with the cells. When there is bleeding, the platelets are activated and become sticky. Also, with the bleeding the proteins are able to stick together. When the body realizes that it is bleeding, the platelets and the proteins all form a type of plug that stops the blood from flowing out.

Deep vein thrombosis, or DVTs, occur when blood in the veins clots. This can happen for several different reasons. Usually, something happens in the blood that causes it to coagulate or form clots. This usually occurs in deep veins, these are the large veins in the legs or within the pelvis. When the clots form there, the main problems occur when the clot (or part of the clot) breaks off and travels through the heart to the lungs.

Although the clots are not supposed to normally occur within the veins of the body, there are a number of different things that can cause this to happen. Certain levels of hormones in the body can cause the blood to be more likely to clot, smoking increases the rate of blood clotting, as does a person's obesity.

One common cause of clots forming happens when a person does not move around enough to keep the blood pumping through their body. This happens when a person is hospitalized and cannot move around as much as they are used to, and this can also happen when a person who has blood that is too likely to clot sits still for a long time, such as during a long flight. When this happens, the blood is allowed to sit in one place for a long period of time, and when this happens, it has more of a chance to start to cause blood clots.

Once these blood clots are found, doctors try to keep them from getting larger or from forming in other parts of the body, and then try to allow them to dissolve. For this reason, a patient may be put on medications. Commonly referred to as blood thinners, these medications stop or slow down some of the clotting ability of the blood. Warfarin (Coumadin) is a common medication used for this.

Doctors may also recommend that a patient take aspirin every day, which helps to keep the platelets from being able to stick together. Other medications may be used, and sometimes a patient that has to lie in bed will have stockings put on their legs to keep the blood flowing.

Health is not a condition of matter, but of mind

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Justin can be reached by email at Justin.Tyler.Newman@gmail.com with comments or ideas for topics that you may desire to be addressed in this column. The goal of this column is that you find it not only entertaining and informative but also that it creates a desire to take a life-long interest your health and body.