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If you're planning a long automobile trip or airline flight, keep in mind that sitting motionless for long periods may increase the risk that the blood in your legs will pool and clot. Deep vein thrombosis has become a hazard of air travel—especially for those seated in the coach cabin, where there is minimal leg room; it has been nicknamed “Economy Class” syndrome. However, you may be at risk of DVT even if you fly First or Business Class—or drive to your destination without getting out of the car occasionally to stretch your legs.



An Ounce of Prevention

A few simple precautions may help prevent DVT:

- Dress comfortably, in loose clothing. Avoid tight garments and shoes. For a long flight, pack slippers or an extra pair of warm socks. (Passengers in First Class often receive cloth booties.) These not only keep your feet warm but also allow the blood in your feet to circulate more freely.
- Get up to stretch your legs at least once every hour.
- Avoid alcohol, which is dehydrating. The air inside planes is very dry, and passengers can easily become dehydrated. Dehydration thickens the blood and may raise the risk of clots.
- Drink plenty of nonalcoholic liquids. They prevent dehydration and force you to walk to the restroom occasionally! You may choose to carry a water bottle on board, rather than wait for the beverage cart to arrive.
- While seated, stretch your legs occasionally. Do partial leg lifts, and flex and extend your ankles. Tighten and then release your buttocks. Take slow, deep breaths from time to time.
- If you've had problems with blood clots in the past, wear elastic support hose during your trip. These are available for both men and women, but may require a prescription from your health care provider.