

Frequently Asked Questions about Thrombophilia

1. Why was I sent to a Hematologist?

You were probably asked to schedule a consultation visit with a Hematologist because your doctor performed tests that indicated you might be at an increased risk to develop blood clots. These clots could form in the veins of your legs (deep vein thrombosis), lungs (pulmonary embolism), or brain (cerebral venous thrombosis) or in the arteries of your heart (myocardial infarction) or brain (stroke). In addition, if you are a woman who has experienced one or more miscarriages, clots could have formed in the developing placenta resulting in fetal loss.

2. What is the Rush Hemophilia & Thrombophilia Center?

The Rush HTC is a multi-disciplinary practice devoted to the diagnosis and management of bleeding and clotting disorders in all ages of patients.

3. Why am I in a Pediatric Hematology office?

You were referred to Dr Leonard A. Valentino, the Director of the Rush Hemophilia and Thrombophilia Center and a Board Certified Pediatric Hematologist who is a specialist in disorders of blood coagulation- bleeding and clotting problems. There are very few Hematologists (adult or pediatric) who have special expertise in blood clotting disorders. Dr Valentino is one of these doctors. His practice is limited to evaluation and care of children, adolescents and young adults with problems of blood clotting and bleeding. He has provided care for children and adults for more than 15 years.

4. What is a blood clot?

A blood clot is an obstruction in a blood vessel, either a vein or an artery that prevents blood flow. Without blood flow, organs like the heart, brain or placenta and tissues like muscles cannot function normally. In some cases, a blood clot can form in the veins of the thigh and travel to the lungs resulting in a pulmonary embolism.

5. Why do some people develop a blood clot?

Blood clots can develop spontaneously without provocation. Most blood clots form as a result of many factors all working together to increase an individual's risk. An important reason why some people develop a blood clot is that they were born with a genetic abnormality that is associated with an increased tendency to form blood clots. Some of these risk factors are given in the table below.

Transient risk factors

Immobility, fractures, bed rest, surgery

Obesity (Body mass index over 30)

High cholesterol and tobacco use (smoking)

Central venous access device

Pregnancy, oral contraceptive pills

Permanent risk factors

Thrombophilia (e.g., Factor V Leiden, elevated Lpa)

Cancer, leukemia or lymphoma

Paralysis

6. What are the signs of a blood clot?

The signs of a blood clot depend on the location of the clot. The table below can help you recognize the common signs of a blood clot. As a blood clot can form anywhere there is a blood vessel, these are not the only signs and symptoms possible. If you have any question that you might have a blood clot, proceed immediately to the closest emergency room or alternatively call 911.

Type of clot	Location	Signs you might see	Symptoms you might experience
Deep vein (DVT)	Calf, thigh, pelvis or arm	Redness, swelling	Pain, tenderness
Pulmonary embolism (PE)	Lungs	None visible	Shortness of breath, chest pain,
Cerebral vein (CVT)	Brain	None visible	Headache, blurred vision, nausea or vomiting
Myocardial infarction	Heart	None visible	Mid-sternal crushing chest pain, nausea, shortness of breath
Stroke	Brain	Facial or body asymmetry	Headache, blurred vision, nausea or vomiting

7. What should I do if I think I might have a blood clot?

You should call 911 or go to the closet emergency room and explain you symptoms and that you (may) have a blood disorder that increases your risk of developing a blood clot.

8. How can I reduce my risk of developing a blood clot?

An individual can change some risk factors that increase the chances of developing a blood clot.

- Weight reduction
- Stop smoking
- Avoid high risk situations
- Exercise regularly
- Reduce high cholesterol levels
- Take prescribed medications

If you have medical questions, please call one of our nurses, Audrey Taylor, RN or Maggie Ballarin, RN, MSN at 877-787-4543.

Debra Honig, MSW, LCSW can be reached at the same toll-free telephone number to discuss issues related to stress and the psychological adjustment to your diagnosis, compliance with the treatments prescribed or any other concerns you may have.

For financial issues or questions related to billing, please contact Gladys Lee, MBA at the same toll-free number.