

BLOOD CLOTS AND CANCER

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW



To help patients and caregivers understand
the risk of cancer-associated blood clots.



National
Blood Clot
Alliance

DEDICATED EXPERIENCED SUPPORT
SHARE
sharecancersupport.org

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WELCOME

PATIENT SUPPORT



A cancer diagnosis can be overwhelming and difficult, both physically and emotionally. Patients and caregivers have so much new information to absorb and treatments to manage. One important and often overlooked action is to understand your risk for potentially life-threatening blood clots. This information is critical because cancer and some of its treatments can increase your risk of getting a blood clot.

WHAT IS A BLOOD CLOT?



A blood clot is a gel-like collection of blood that can form inside a blood vessel (vein or artery). Blood clotting is a normal bodily process, also called coagulation, that helps prevent excessive bleeding from an injury or cut. However, sometimes blood clots form when they aren't needed and cause serious medical problems, such as deep vein thrombosis (DVT) and pulmonary embolism (PE).

TYPES OF BLOOD CLOTS

- **Deep vein thrombosis (DVT):** A blood clot that occurs in a deep vein, most often in the leg or arm.
- **Pulmonary embolism (PE):** A blood clot that started somewhere else in the body, usually a DVT, that breaks free and becomes lodged in the lungs, blocking blood flow. This is a very serious and life-threatening condition that must be treated immediately.
- **Venous thromboembolism (VTE):** Blood clots that occur in the veins, refers collectively to DVT and PE.

KNOW YOUR RISK

Cancer itself increases the risk of blood clots. Cancer cells make chemicals that stimulate the body to produce clotting factors, which combine with platelets to form blood clots.

- Blood clots affect 900,000 Americans each year, and approximately 20% occur in patients with cancer.
- Blood clots are often preventable and treatable, yet due to lack of awareness, they are the leading cause of death among cancer patients, after the cancer itself.
- If you have cancer, you can protect yourself by learning about your individual risk for blood clots, which varies based on diagnosis, treatment, and other risk factors.

Downloadable Resource (↓)

STOP THE CLOT, **SPREAD THE WORD**®



Checklist for blood clot risk

CANCER-ASSOCIATED RISK FACTORS

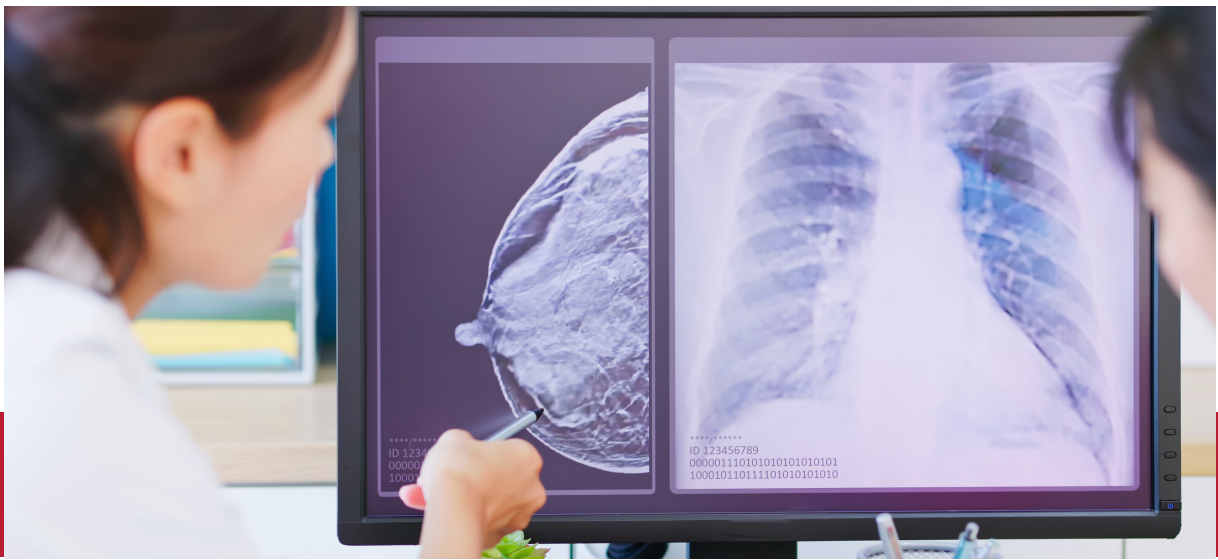
In addition to the cancer itself, several other cancer-associated factors further increase risk, including:

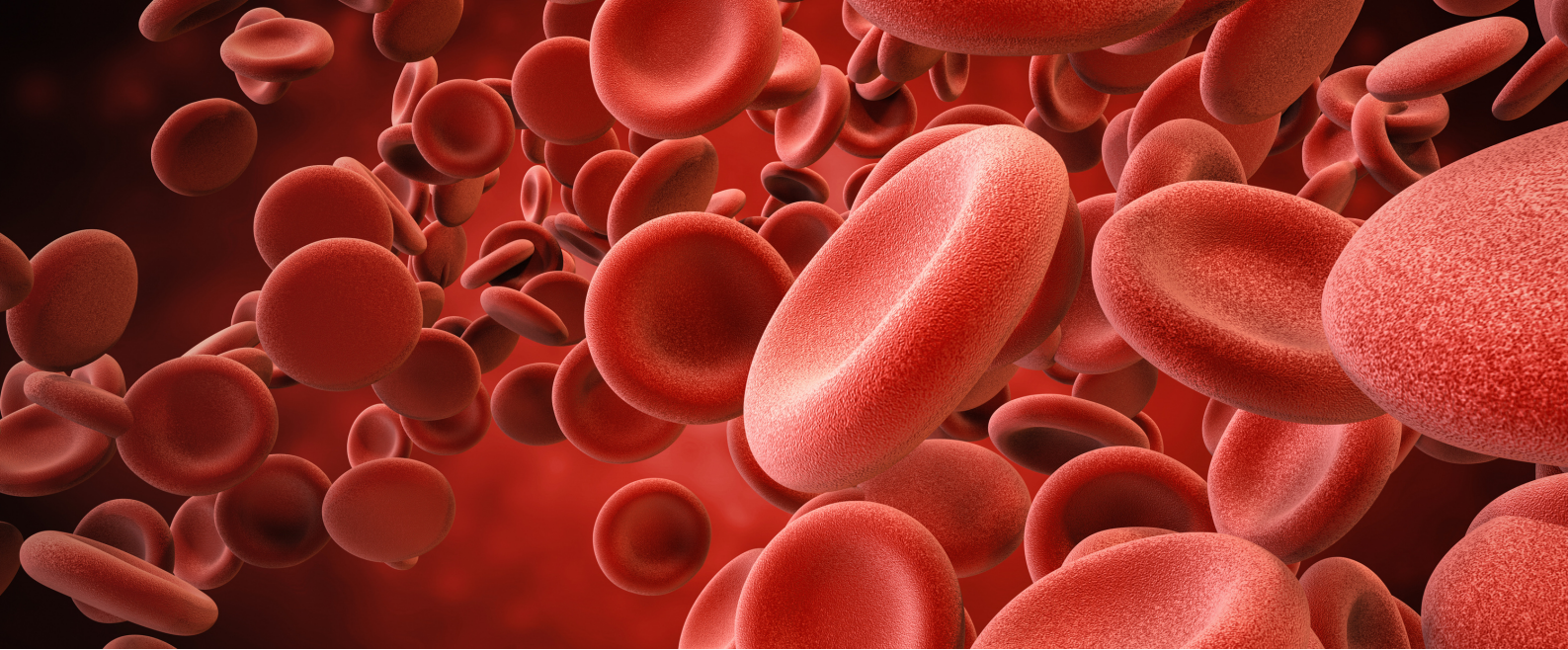
Type and Stage of Cancer

- Cancers that involve the pancreas, stomach, brain, lungs, uterus, ovaries, and kidneys, as well as blood cancers, such as lymphoma and myeloma
- The first few months after cancer is diagnosed, usually when treatment occurs
- Advanced or late-stage cancer

Cancer Treatment

- Central venous catheters
- Chemotherapies and hormonal therapies
- Surgery and hospitalization





OTHER RISK FACTORS

In addition to cancer-associated risk factors, it is important to consider all of your risk factors for blood clots. The chance of a blood clot increases with each additional risk factor. Some other common risk factors include:

- Previous blood clot
- Family history of blood clots or inherited clotting disorder
- Accident, severe trauma or muscle injury, broken bone
- Immobility or sitting for longer than four hours
- Pregnancy and childbirth
- Hip or knee replacement surgery
- Oral contraceptives or hormone replacement therapy containing estrogen
- Obesity
- Smoking or vaping
- Age 55+
- Medical conditions, such as heart and lung diseases, or diabetes

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS



Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT)

- Swelling, usually in one leg (or arm)
- Leg pain or tenderness often described as a cramp or charley horse
- Reddish or bluish skin discoloration
- Leg (or arm) warm to touch

Contact your doctor as soon as possible if you have any of these symptoms.

Learn more about how a DVT is diagnosed [here](#).



Pulmonary Embolism

- Sudden shortness of breath
- Chest pain-sharp, stabbing; may get worse with deep breath
- Rapid heart rate
- Unexplained cough, sometimes with bloody mucus

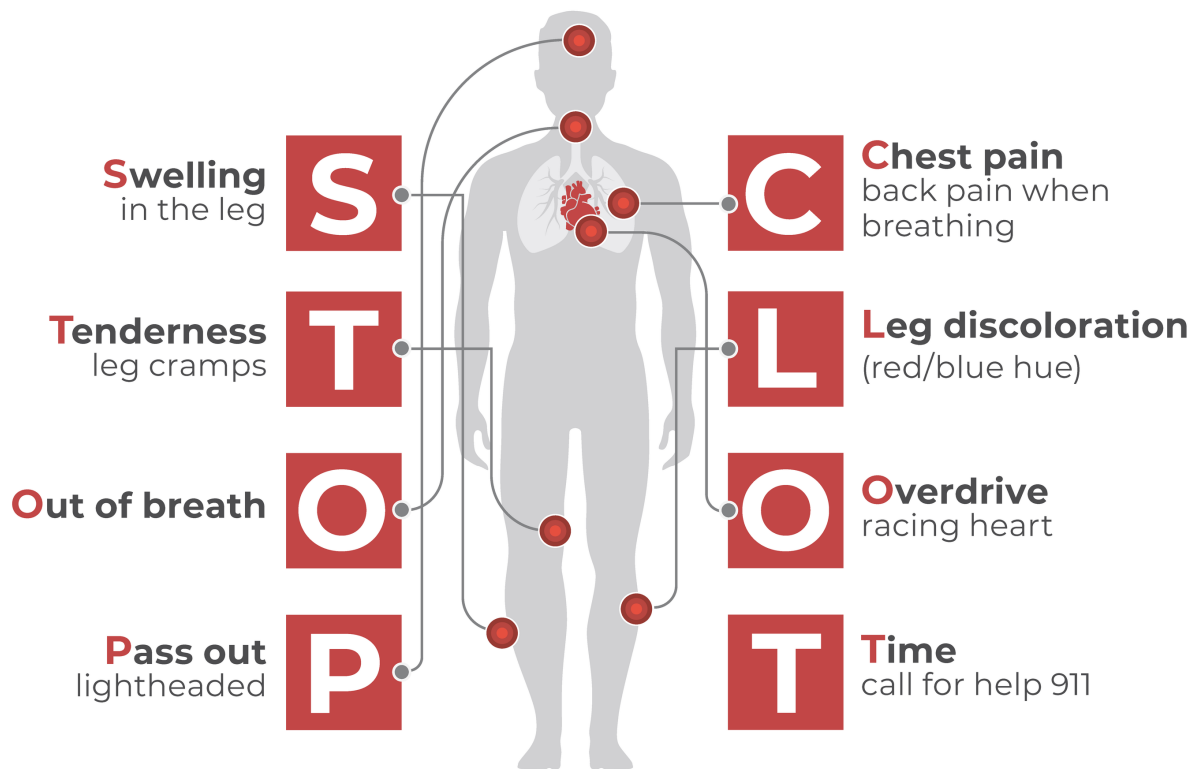
Call an ambulance or 9-1-1 immediately for treatment in the ER if you experience these PE symptoms.

Learn more about how a PE is diagnosed [here](#).

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

STOP THE CLOT®

BLOOD CLOT AWARENESS: KNOW THE SIGNS & SYMPTOMS



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Learn more about
blood clots here

BLOOD CLOT PREVENTION



- **Make a Plan**

Work with your healthcare team and make a blood clot prevention plan specific to your medical history, current cancer treatment, and blood clot risk.

- **Know the Signs and Symptoms**

It is most important that you recognize the signs and symptoms of blood clots and seek immediate medical attention if you experience any of them.

- **Take Prescribed Anticoagulants**

An anticoagulant (blood thinner) may be prescribed in some instances when blood clot risk is elevated, as a preventative measure. Ask your cancer doctor if this is something you should consider based on your individual risk factors.

- **Use Mechanical Blood Clot Prevention**

If you are at high risk for bleeding complications, the use of anticoagulants may not be recommended. Instead, your doctor may advise the use of compression stockings or inflatable leg pumps (intermittent pneumatic compression devices) to prevent bloods from forming.

BLOOD CLOT TREATMENT

Blood clots are highly treatable. Early diagnosis and treatment are essential to reducing complications of blood clots, including death.

Anticoagulants, often referred to as blood thinners, are typically administered to cancer patients who develop blood clots. Types of common anticoagulants used to treat blood clots include direct oral anticoagulants (DOACs) such as Apixaban (Eliquis) and Rivaroxaban (Xarelto); and low molecular weight heparin (LMWH) such as Enoxaparin (Lovenox).

Treatment options should be discussed with your medical team.



NBCA AND SHARE

The National Blood Clot Alliance (NBCA)

NBCA is the nation's preeminent nonprofit patient advocacy organization in the United States focused on blood clot prevention, education, and awareness. NBCA offers crucial support, resources, and guidance to individuals and caregivers affected by blood clots, empowering them to take an active role in their healthcare journey. www.stoptheclot.org

SHARE Cancer Support

SHARE is a national nonprofit that supports, educates, and empowers anyone who has been diagnosed with breast or gynecologic cancers, and provides outreach to the general public about signs and symptoms. SHARE is dedicated to serving people of all races and cultures, backgrounds and identities. No one should have to face breast, ovarian, uterine, cervical or metastatic breast cancer alone. www.sharecancersupport.org