

DVT Awareness In Motion - Dr. Geno Merli Script

[[TRT 07:18]]

Welcome to “DVT Awareness In Motion,” presented by the Coalition to Prevent Deep-Vein Thrombosis. I am Dr. Geno Merli, and I am honored to be able to talk to you today about the importance of knowing your risk factors for DVT. That knowledge can empower you to have a dialogue with your healthcare professional and to avoid the potentially life threatening complications of this condition.

As a physician and a member of the Coalition to Prevent DVT’s steering committee, I can’t tell you how thrilled I am to bring you this educational program. Many people don’t realize that immobility or restricted movement due to injury, illness, or other factors is one of the things that can put you at increased risk for DVT. You see, when the muscles of the legs are inactive, blood can collect in the lower extremities, increasing the risk for DVT. By encouraging blood circulation through increased movement, you can help reduce your risk.

In fact, immobility from hospitalization is such a big risk factor that in its first six years, the Coalition to Prevent DVT concentrated primarily on the hospitalized patient. But we realize the risk of DVT does not diminish once a patient leaves the hospital. So now in its seventh year, the Coalition is expanding its focus to include patients at discharge, to make sure that each patient’s risk is properly monitored and treated.

The Coalition encourages health care professionals to extend the scope of our care so that no patient is left behind throughout each transition of care. From admittance, to the hospital stay, at discharge, and on through recovery, patients can be assured that they are receiving the proper attention and information about DVT.

Movement is one way to help reduce DVT risk. There are many other things people can do to help reduce their risk for DVT, such as avoiding smoking and staying hydrated. But some patients may require compression stockings or medications such as anticoagulants. Also, be aware that DVT events may occur after you begin to become mobile again, so it’s important to have ongoing conversations with your healthcare professional.

As some of you may have already heard from Melanie Bloom or Bonnie Bernstein during this program, DVT occurs when a blood clot forms in one of the large veins, usually in the lower limbs, leading to either partially or completely blocked circulation. A DVT blood clot has the potential to move into the lungs and block circulation to this vital organ, creating a life threatening condition known as pulmonary embolism, or PE. PE requires immediate medical attention.

There are few public health problems as serious as DVT and PE, and yet these conditions receive little public attention. The good news is that DVT is preventable and treatable if it is diagnosed in a timely manner.

Okay. Now let’s get into some of the serious, often unknown or overlooked risk factors for DVT. First, some inherited blood clotting disorders can contribute to the condition, as can certain heart or respiratory diseases or cancer. But there are more common risk factors, such as prolonged immobility, particularly after surgery or an acute illness; dehydration; being

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overweight; and smoking. Women are also at greater risk for DVT when they are taking birth control pills or hormone replacement therapy.

(Note: The risk factors will appear on screen during the following segment)

Additional risk factors include congestive heart failure or respiratory failure; age over 40 years; and as I mentioned, a prior or family history of blood clotting disorders. Having three or more risk factors increases your chances of a DVT that may lead to a potentially fatal PE.

The risk of developing DVT is nearly eight times higher in hospitalized patients; therefore, knowing whether you have other risk factors can go a long way in helping to reduce your risk for DVT. Almost all hospitalized patients have at least one risk factor for DVT and PE. Approximately 40 percent of patients have three or more risk factors.

Please, talk to your healthcare professional to find out if you may be at risk for DVT. So what are the symptoms of DVT that you should look out for? These are important to recognize, and they could save your life. Symptoms include pain, swelling, tenderness, discoloration or redness of the affected area, such as a limb; and skin that is warm to the touch. However, as many as half of all DVT episodes produce minimal symptoms or are completely "silent" - and that's the frightening part.

(Text on screen: Because a number of other conditions - including muscle strains, skin infections, and phlebitis (inflammation of veins) - display symptoms similar to those of DVT, the condition may be difficult to diagnose without specific tests.)

The Coalition to Prevent DVT has evolved to provide a national voice on this silent killer, and we are proud to count more than 60 public health organizations as members. Since its founding in 2003, the Coalition has worked to urge Americans and healthcare professionals like me to join national efforts to further raise awareness of DVT and its potentially fatal complication, pulmonary embolism. We also work to promote measures that address and close the gap between the need for DVT risk assessment and patient understanding.

Since its inception, the Coalition continues to surpass all major milestones in increasing awareness and involvement, and it shows no signs of slowing. In 2008 our nation's surgeon general issued a call to action to prevent DVT and PE, driving awareness to reduce the number of cases in the United States.

But, more work needs to be done. DVT is a public health crisis that affects up to two million Americans each year. And as you may have already heard, up to 300,000 people with PE die each year – more than the total number of deaths from breast cancer and AIDS combined. Yet surprisingly, many people have little or no awareness of this condition or how to recognize its signs and symptoms.

Thank you for listening to my message. Looking for symptoms and thinking about the risk factors are the first steps, but the next ones are up to you. Preventing life-threatening conditions is my life's work, and I thank you for doing your part.

Please listen to Melanie Bloom and Bonnie Bernstein tell their stories based upon experience and hope. And most importantly, please watch Mary Ann Wilson as she shows you various movements that may help reduce your risk for this potentially fatal condition. Thank you.

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[On screen disclaimer] Ambulation/movement is only one way to help reduce DVT risk. Some patients may require compression socks or medications such as anticoagulants – please talk to your healthcare professional. Please be aware that DVT events may occur after you begin to become mobile again.

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