

Venous Thromboembolism (Blood Clots) and Pregnancy

While everyone is at risk for developing a blood clot (also called venous thromboembolism or VTE), pregnancy increases that risk fivefold.

Why Do Pregnant Women Have a Higher Risk of Developing a Blood Clot?

Women are especially at risk for blood clots during pregnancy, childbirth, and the three-month period after delivery. Here's why:

- During pregnancy, a woman's blood clots more easily to lessen blood loss during labour and delivery.
- Pregnant women may also experience less blood flow to the legs later in pregnancy because the blood vessels around the pelvis are pressed upon by the growing baby.

Several other factors may also increase a pregnant woman's risk for a blood clot:

- A family or personal history of blood clots or a blood clotting disorder;
- Delivery by caesarean-section;
- Prolonged immobility (not moving a lot), such as during bed rest or recovery after delivery;
- Complications of pregnancy and childbirth; and
- Certain long-term medical conditions, such as heart or lung conditions, or diabetes.

Take Steps to Protect Yourself and Your Baby from Blood Clots During Pregnancy and After Delivery

Know the signs and symptoms of blood clots:

- A blood clot occurring in the legs or arms is called deep vein thrombosis (DVT). Signs and symptoms of a DVT include:
 - Swelling of the affected limb;
 - Pain or tenderness not caused by injury; and
 - Skin that is warm to the touch, red, or discolored.
- If you have these signs or symptoms, alert your doctor as soon as possible.**
- A blood clot in the legs or arms can break off and travel to the lungs. This is called a pulmonary embolism (PE), and can be life threatening. Signs and symptoms of a PE include:
 - Difficulty breathing;
 - Chest pain that worsens with a deep breath or cough;
 - Coughing up blood; and
 - Faster than normal or irregular heartbeat.

Seek immediate medical attention if you experience any of these signs or symptoms.

Talk with your healthcare provider about factors that might increase your risk for a blood clot. Let your provider know if you or anyone else in your family has ever had a blood clot.

Follow Your Healthcare Provider's Instructions Closely During Pregnancy and After Delivery

In general, if a pregnant woman is at high risk for a blood clot or experiences a blood clot during pregnancy or after delivery, she may be prescribed a medicine. This medicine, injected under the skin, is used to prevent or treat blood clots during and after pregnancy. Be sure to talk with your healthcare provider to understand the best course of management for you.