

Transgender Health and Blood
Clot Risk: What You Should Know

PATIENT TOOLKIT



About This Toolkit

This toolkit was created to educate transgender patients about the potential risk for blood clots in the setting of gender-affirming care.

In this toolkit, you will find information on these topics:

- What a blood clot is
- Risk factors for a blood clot
- Common signs and symptoms of a blood clot
- How hormone therapies and surgery can raise blood clot risk
- How to talk to your care provider about blood clot risk

Before you dive in, it's important to know that **the risk for blood clots IS not and SHOULD not be a barrier** to receiving gender-affirming care.



<< Scan our QR code or [visit us online](#) to access our full digital toolkit.

Note: This guide is for educational purposes only. Please talk to your doctor or healthcare team if you have specific medical questions.



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What Is a Blood Clot?

Blood clots are clumps of blood that stick together. Usually, they protect the body by stopping bleeding (like after a cut or scrape). Sometimes, blood clots can form on their own and become dangerous. When a blood clot blocks a vein, it's called a **venous thromboembolism** (VTE).

VTE includes:

- **Deep vein thrombosis** (DVT): a clot in the legs, thighs, or arms
- **Pulmonary embolism** (PE): a clot that travels to the lungs

DVT and PE can be life-threatening because they block blood flow to important body parts. Knowing about the risk factors and signs/symptoms of a blood clot can help save lives.

Treatment may involve medications to prevent new clots from forming, or in severe cases, surgery to remove the clot or fix damaged vessels.



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Recognizing Risk Factors for a Blood Clot

Doctors don't always know why blood clots develop, but some people have a higher chance of developing a blood clot than others. There are several risk factors that can raise the risk of a clot, including:

- **Inactivity** or sitting a long time
- **Obesity**
- **Smoking**
- **Surgery**
- **Cancer** and its treatments
- **Genetic clotting disorders**
- **Hormone therapies*** (like birth control or gender-affirming hormones)

*For patients receiving hormone therapy, it's important to know that testosterone hormones are not known to cause blood clots but estrogen hormones can increase the risk.



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Blood Clot Signs & Symptoms

A **deep vein thrombosis** (also called a DVT) is a blood clot in that happens in a deep vein in the legs, thighs, or arms.

A **pulmonary embolism** (also called a PE) is a blood clot that has travelled to your lungs.

DVT Symptoms	PE Symptoms
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Swelling of the legs, ankles, or feet, arms, or forearms• Pain, tenderness, itching, or warmth in legs, thighs, or arms• Changes in skin color (red or dusky bluish/purple)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Shortness of breath• Chest pain• Coughing or coughing up blood• Fast heart rate• Dizziness

If you experience any of these signs or symptoms, call your doctor right away or head to the closest emergency room.



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Hormone Therapy and Blood Clot Risk: What Do I Need to Know?

The most important thing to know upfront is that **the risk of a blood clot is small and should NOT stop you from getting gender-affirming care.**

- **Gender-affirming hormone therapy has known benefits, but like any treatment, it carries some risk** such as blood clots in veins. This can be dangerous.
- **We are still learning about the risks of hormone therapy.** Taking testosterone is not known to cause blood clots, but estrogen **can** increase risk.
- **Not everyone who takes estrogen will develop a clot, but certain factors can raise the risk.** In many cases, your doctor can adjust your estrogen dose or change the way that you take your estrogen to help reduce risk.



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How to Talk to Your Care Provider about Gender-Affirming Care and Blood Clot Risk

Gender-affirming care is lifesaving care. If you're on hormone therapy or having gender-affirming surgery, talk about the risk of blood clots with your healthcare team.

Ask Questions!

1. What is a blood clot?
2. Why are hormone therapy and surgery risk factors for blood clots?
3. What are my options for hormone therapy?
 - a. Are there medicines with a lower risk of blood clots?
(Some estrogen hormones put on the skin have less risk than taking estrogen pills.)
4. What do I need to know about blood clot risk and my surgery?
5. Are there things I should do before or after surgery to prevent blood clots?

To make the most of your healthcare visits, you can ACT:
ACKNOWLEDGE concerns | **COME** prepared | **TALK** about it

Risk of Blood Clots in Gender-Affirming Care

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About The Committee

"Our committee is dedicated to improving the health and wellness of the transgender community by increasing awareness about the potential risk of blood clots along the gender affirmation journey.

We value everyone's unique experiences and are committed to helping our community move forward in their journeys without fear and through the exchange of positive facts and information.

At the end of the day, we all matter and no one is alone!"

COMMITTEE TEAM

Committee Co-Chairs:

Troy Keyser, MA (He/him)
Andrea Martinez (She/her)

Committee Members:

Kelley Blair, MS, LPC
(They/them)
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Fighting blood clots through education

The North American Thrombosis Forum (NATF) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the lives of those affected by blood clots and related conditions.



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