

深層靜脈血栓

深層靜脈血栓是甚麼？

深層靜脈血栓是指血塊在靜脈血管中形成，可在任何雙腿血液不流通的情況下出現。於旅客而言，此現象因長途旅程坐著不動而出現的機會較大，亦常被誤稱為經濟客艙綜合症。研究顯示旅客乘坐長途巴士，汽車，火車或飛機商務客艙亦會由於坐著不動而出現深層靜脈血栓。倘若血塊在血管中脫落，經血液循環系統進入肺部時，則可導致肺栓。假如肺栓夠大，則可令肺血管瘀塞而致命。

旅客於旅途中出現深層靜脈血栓的機會是很低的，除非存在下列一項或多於一項的高危因素：

- 過往曾出現深層靜脈血栓或肺栓現象
- 近親出現深層靜脈血栓或肺栓現象
- 服用雌激素賀爾蒙治療，口服避孕藥
- 懷孕
- 近期曾動手術(尤其是腹部及腳部的)
- 癌症
- 遺傳性血凝結問題

亦有研究指出高齡，肥胖，吸煙和靜脈曲張也可增加風險。

深層靜脈血栓有何徵狀？

大多數深層靜脈血栓患者的血塊都是很細小，不會引起徵狀。大型的血栓則會引起徵狀，包括小腿酸軟，肌肉疼痛和腿部腫脹，同樣地，大多數的肺栓都沒有徵狀，小部份患者會出現氣喘，呼吸時胸口痛和間中咳血，嚴重者會引致突然死亡。嚴重病患者通常會於飛行航程中或於抵步後在機場時出現，亦有部份個案於很多小時或數日後才出現病徵。

怎樣預防深層靜脈血栓？

旅客如有一項或多於一項上述的高危因素，應在乘坐 3 小時或以上的航程前諮詢醫生或旅遊醫學專家的意見。

就沒有以上高危因素的大多數旅客而言，預防措施如下：

- 於客艙中至少每小時走動，因為造成此現象的主因是靜脈血液不流通，而走動可令腿部肌肉收縮而令到血液在靜脈中運行。亦可於座位中做腿部運動、大部份的長途航機都會於航程中播放指導乘客如何做腿部運動的短片。
- 避免穿著緊身衣服，腰部和膝部的衣服不可太緊。可考慮穿著緊壓的襪子，但必須選擇合適尺碼才可發揮預防功効。
- 宜喝大量清水，避免喝咖啡及酒，因這些都屬於利尿飲料，容易引致身體脫水，血液變濃。
- 應避免只靠服用亞士畢靈來預防深層靜脈血栓，因現階段沒有證據顯示亞士畢靈能有效地預防疾患。

怎樣治療深層靜脈血栓？

深層靜脈血栓是可用抗凝血劑的藥物治療。旅客如於飛行航程中或長途航程後 4 週內出現上述深層靜脈血栓或肺栓的病徵，應立刻諮詢醫生的意見以便作出適當治療。

Deep Vein Thrombosis

What is deep vein thrombosis ?

Deep vein thrombosis (DVT) is the formation of a blood clot in the deep venous system. It may occur in any situation where there is prolonged pooling of blood in the deep veins of the legs. For travellers, it is often seen in those who have sat still too long in long-haul airline flights and has often been mistakenly called Economy Class Syndrome. In fact, research has shown that DVT can occur as a result of prolonged immobility during long-distance travel by car, bus, train or air (in business class too). If the formed blood clot become detached and travel with the bloodstream to become lodged in the lungs, it will cause a pulmonary embolus (PE). A PE large enough to block a major pulmonary vessel can be fatal.

The risk of developing DVT when travelling is very small unless one or more of the following risk factors exist:-

- Previous DVT or PE

- History of DVT or PE in a close family member
- Use of oral contraceptives or hormone replacement
- Pregnancy
- Recent surgery to tummy or legs
- Cancer
- Inherited blood-clotting abnormalities

Some researches suggest old age, smoking, obesity and varicose veins also increase the risk.

What are the symptoms of DVT?

Most cases of DVT only suffer from small clots and do not cause any symptoms. Larger clots may cause symptoms, such as soreness, pain and swelling of the leg. PE is also commonly silent, but can cause chest pain, breathlessness and occasionally coughing up of blood. In severe case, the large clot can cause sudden death. Most episodes of serious DVT or PE occur during or immediately after flight while the passenger is still in the airport, but they may occur many hours or even days later.

How to prevent DVT?

Travellers with one or more above risk factors should seek advice from their

doctors or travel medicine practitioners before taking a flight of 3 or more hours.

For the majority who do not possess above risk factors, the advices are:-

- Whenever possible and at least hourly, travellers should get up and walk around the cabin as preventing blood pooling is the most important measure for DVT. The walking will make leg muscles contract and keep blood flowing through the veins. Alternatively, they can do some foot exercises while seating. Most airlines have video show to inform passengers on how to do the exercises during long-haul flight.
- Wearing comfortable, loose-fitting clothing that is not tight at the knees or waist and compression stockings may be useful, but the latter need to be of the correct size to be effective.
- Drink enough water and avoid alcohol and coffee to prevent dehydration and thickening of blood.
- Do not use aspirin just to prevent DVT, as there is lack of clear evidence of its benefit.

What is the treatment of DVT?

Anticoagulant therapy is effective for DVT. Travellers who develop any symptoms or signs of DVT, during or immediately after a flight or within the next 4 weeks, should seek medical attention at once for treatment.