

Busting the clot

Treatment can prevent death

What do Vice President Dick Cheney and NBC correspondent David Bloom have in common? They both had a deep vein thrombosis (DVT). The important difference is that Cheney received treatment for his DVT. Bloom died suddenly with no treatment.

A DVT is a blood clot that forms in the large veins of the body, most commonly the legs. Blood clots can slow or stop blood flow, which causes pain and swelling. Sometimes the clot breaks off and can travel to the lungs. This can cause shortness of breath, chest pain and even sudden death.

Clots occur more often after surgery or a stay in the hospital. Sitting for four or more hours at a time also can increase your risk.

If you are obese, pregnant, on birth control pills or have lupus, you are more likely to have a DVT. As you age, your risk for blood clots also increases.

Every year, about one in 1,000 people will develop a blood clot. Your actual risk, however, depends on your personal and family health history. About 33 percent of people with blood clots have inherited a gene change. If you get a blood clot, your doctor will ask you about your family history. If blood clots run in your family, you can talk with your doctor about ways to lower your risk. A strong family history of blood clots suggests that you carry a gene change that increases your risk for a DVT.



For more information about blood clots, visit the Web page on thrombophilia (blood clots) under the community members section of the Genomedical Connection's Web site:
www.genomic-medicine.org

