

Weekend Doctor

By **DR. THOMAS F. VAIL**

Spring has sprung and the travel season has begun! It's time to pack your bags and head off to your favorite destination.

But while you're riding in the car or travelling by plane, remember to stretch those legs to help prevent a serious condition known as deep vein thrombosis.

Deep vein thrombosis is a condition in which a blood clot, a blockage, forms in a vein located deep within the leg.

These clots most commonly occur in the veins of the leg, but can also develop in other parts of the body.

If the clot breaks loose and travels through the bloodstream, it can lodge in the lung. This blockage in the lung, called a pulmonary embolism, can make it difficult to breathe and may even cause death.



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Some people are more at risk than others for developing deep vein thrombosis.

Risk factors include varicose veins, blood clotting disorders, pregnancy or recent childbirth, obesity, tobacco use and heart disease.

People over 40 years old, those who have had recent surgery, or those who are immobile through inactivity or wearing a cast are also more at risk for deep vein thrombosis.

People with deep vein thrombosis in the leg may have either no warning signs or their symptoms can be very vague.

If any of the following warning signs or symptoms are present, it is important to make an appointment for an evaluation:

- Swelling in the leg.
- Pain in the calf or thigh.
- Warmth and redness of the leg.

If you are at risk for deep vein thrombosis and plan on taking a long trip this season, follow these tips to reduce the likelihood of developing a blood clot:

- Exercise legs every two to three hours to get the blood flowing back to the heart. Walk up and down the aisle of a plane or train, rotate ankles while sitting and take regular breaks on road trips.

- Stay hydrated by drinking plenty of fluids and avoid caffeine and alcohol.

- Consider wearing compression stockings. Fit shoes in the afternoon and compression stockings in the morning. That's the simple but effective rule that works.

For diabetics, usually we suggest 15 to 20 mmHg compression for those with edema and 10 to 15 mmHg for those without. For anything higher than 20mmHg compression, patients should be custom measured by a physician, especially if they have peripheral arterial disease.

Vail is with Advanced Footcare Clinic, Findlay. Questions for Blanchard Valley Health System doctors may be sent to weekend@thecourier.com, or to Weekend, The Courier, P.O. Box 609, Findlay, OH 45839.