



Australian Government

Comcare

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DEEP VEIN THROMBOSIS (DVT)

This guidance will assist employers and workers to understand the risks of Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT).

WHAT IS DVT?

DVT is a blood clot that develops in the deep veins of the body, usually the leg. If not treated, there is a risk part of the blood clot may become dislodged and travel through the blood stream to the heart, brain or lungs and cause organ damage, heart attack or stroke.

WHY DOES DVT OCCUR?

DVT may occur because of sustained periods of immobility or inactivity. Causes of immobilisation include illness, surgery and even during travel. Some individuals are more at risk than others of developing DVT—including people:

- > over the age of 40
- > who are overweight or obese
- > smokers
- > diabetics
- > who are pregnant or taking a contraceptive pill
- > with severe varicose veins
- > with an inflammatory disease (e.g. rheumatoid arthritis or inflammatory bowel disease)
- > with a past history of DVT
- > with a family history of DVT
- > with cancer and are undergoing treatment
- > who have had recent surgery or a plaster cast.

DVT RISKS AND TRAVEL

Travel of any form may result in periods of immobility. In order to reduce the risk of DVT associated with this inactivity those traveling should consider:

1. Planning stopovers to decrease the length of continual travel.
2. Exercising and mobilising your legs and ankles and massaging your calves. Suggested exercises are detailed in reading material provided on some air and rail carriers.
3. Limiting your intake of caffeine, alcohol and other dehydrating agents.
4. Drinking plenty of (non-alcoholic) fluids that are low sugar.
5. Wearing compression stockings (especially if you are at high risk).
6. Keeping SAFE—Support, Activity, Fluids, Ensure no pressure (on calf muscles).

If you are concerned that you are at a high risk of DVT, you should seek medical advice on measures to control the risks during periods of extended inactivity and during travel. You might also consider informing your employer if you are at a high risk of DVT.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For more information you can contact Comcare on 1300 366 979 or at www.comcare.gov.au.

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Smartraveller website—<http://www.smartraveller.gov.au/>.

Department of Health and Ageing website—<http://www.health.gov.au/>.