

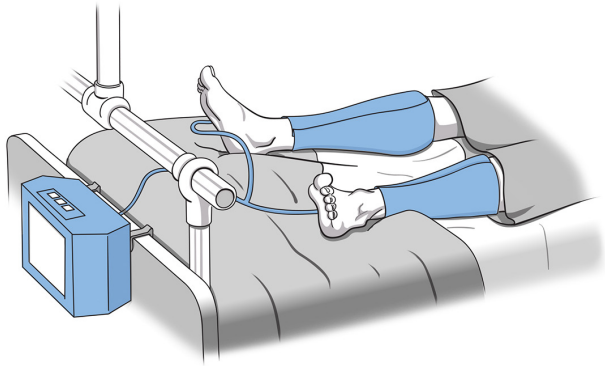
# Preventing Blood Clots in the Hospital

While in the hospital, you have an increased risk for blood clots to form in your legs. The normal flow of blood in your body can slow down after surgery or when you're less active, and blood clots can form. Blood clots can harm your blood vessels and be life-threatening. You're at risk for two main conditions:

- **Deep vein thrombosis (DVT):** A blood clot that forms in a deep vein, usually an arm or leg, limiting blood flow to that area
- **Pulmonary embolism (PE):** A blood clot that breaks off and travels to the lungs

To help prevent these conditions, your health care team will create a plan that's right for you. Your doctor may order sequential compression devices (SCDs) and/or blood thinning medications.

## Sequential Compression Devices (SCDs)



### What are sequential compression devices?

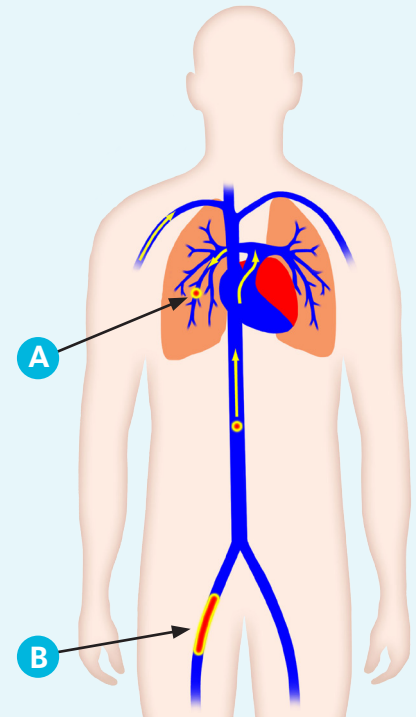
Sequential compression devices can lower the risk of blood clots forming. The SCD is a machine with tubing attached to “sleeves” that are worn on both legs. The sleeves fill with air from a pump and gently squeeze your leg muscles, switching from one leg to another. The squeezing of the sleeves simulates walking, which is the body's normal way of moving blood through the body.

### How will the SCDs feel?

The sleeves fit snugly around your legs. When the pump is turned on, you'll feel a gentle squeezing of one leg for several seconds. The squeezing will stop for a few seconds, and then the other leg will be squeezed. The squeezing will go back and forth from leg to leg. If the wrap feels too loose or too tight, or if you feel any pain, numbness or tingling, notify your health care team.

Image courtesy of Stephan Moll, MD, and Clot Connect (ClotConnect.org)

## Venous Clots



- A Pulmonary embolism (=PE)**
- shortness of breath
  - chest pain
  - cough
  - bloody sputum

- B Deep vein thrombosis (=DVT)**
- swelling
  - pain
  - warmth
  - blue-purple discoloration



## Who should use SCDs?

- Hip and knee replacement surgery patients
- Patients with lymphedema (swelling of the legs and/or arms)
- Obese patients
- Patients confined to bed for a long period of time
- Patients unable to take blood thinners

## Blood-Thinning Medications

Blood thinning medications work to decrease your blood's ability to clot. While the medications don't break up existing clots, they can prevent clots from getting bigger or reduce your risk of forming new clots.

### Your Role in Preventing Blood Clots

- Take all the doses of the medication ordered for you.
- Take the medication even if you're able to get up and walk.

**Refusing to take blood thinning medication puts you at increased risk of forming blood clots.**

If you have any questions, ask your health care team.

## When should I wear SCDs?

SCDs should be used at least 18 hours a day when you're in bed or sitting in a chair. They should be removed when you get up to walk around. Make sure SCDs are reapplied when you return to your bed or chair.

### **Don't refuse. Wear your SCDs.**

Refusing to use SCDs puts you at an increased risk for blood clots to form in your legs. If you have any questions, ask your health care team.

