

Ray Loh
Exercise Physiologist
Sports Medicine and Surgery Clinic
Tan Tock Seng Hospital

Vein issues on the plane

Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT) refers to blood clots that develop in one of the body's deep veins, usually in the lower leg. It has been reported that it affects approximately one in every 1000 people.

DVT was first documented in 1271 and later linked to air travel in 1977, thus receiving the common name of "economy-class syndrome" or "traveller's syndrome". It is caused by immobility during travel by buses, trains and especially flights. The low cabin pressure increases the dehydrating effect and together with the prolonged

inactivity of sitting down with knees bent in a cramped position, it reduces blood circulation and leads to leg swelling. Consuming alcohol and insufficient fluid replenishment during flights can further increase the rate of dehydration.

Although the risk for DVT due to travelling is considered low (one out of 4,656 flights that last more than four hours), the longer the flight, the higher the risk.

Apart from external factors, individuals who are obese and with diabetes particularly those with existing blood circulation issues

have increased risk factors for DVT.

A life-threatening complication of DVT is known as pulmonary embolism (PE). In most cases, PE is caused by blood clots that break loose and travel to the lungs from the legs.

Other than drinking plenty of fluids, reduce alcohol consumption and do not take sleeping tablets. Do simple exercises such as standing up and moving around, stretching your legs, feet and toes every half an hour.

Here are some recommended exercises if you are travelling for long hours:

1. Seated heel raise

Sit with one knee bent, raise heel off the floor slowly inhale while raising heel and exhale while returning heel to the floor. Repeat 5 to 10 repetitions for each leg.

2. Seated alternate leg lift

Sit with both knees bent, lift knee towards chest slowly, inhale while lifting and exhale while returning to start position. Alternate legs and perform 5 to 10 repetitions for each leg.

3. Seated leg extension

Sit with both knees bent, glide heel and extend one leg, exhale when extending and inhale while returning to start position.

4. Seated feet inversion eversion

Sit with one knee bent and the other extended. Inhale and invert the feet of the straight leg and exhale while everting slowly. Perform 5 to 10 repetitions and repeat with other leg.

5. Seated alphabet exercise

Sit with both knees bent. Trace alphabet with your toe of one leg. Trace at least 10 alphabet and repeat with other leg.

1.



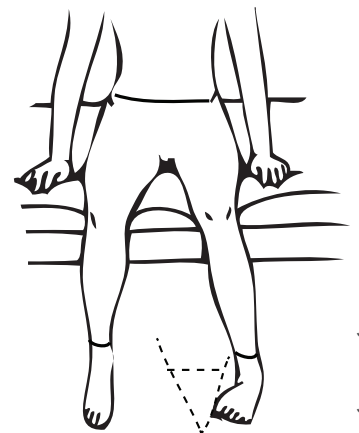
2.



3.



5.



4.



inversion

eversion