

## **PREVENTION OF TRAVELER'S THROMBOSIS**

During the first 3 months after a total joint replacement, you are at an increased risk of developing clots in the veins of your legs and thighs (deep venous thrombosis). Clots in the legs are not serious, but occasionally they break off and travel to the lungs (called pulmonary embolism) causing chest pain and shortness of breath. This is not a common occurrence, but when it does happen, it can be life threatening.

One of the causes of clot formation is prolonged immobilization, such as sitting for many hours at a time. Prolonged immobilization can occur in an airplane, car, train, or bus.

Although healthy individuals may develop clots, those with underlying risk factors such as cancer, obesity, varicose veins, coronary artery disease, certain blood diseases, a history of blood clot formation, pregnancy, women taking oral contraceptive pills, or those on estrogen replacement therapy, are at higher risk.

In order to minimize the risk of traveler's thrombosis, the following is recommended for all travelers:

- a. Do not place baggage underneath the seat in front of you because that reduces the ability to move the legs.
- b. Wear elastic stockings and loose-fitting clothing.
- c. Avoid crossing your legs at your ankles or knees.
- d. Regularly change leg position and exercise the legs by flexing and extending the ankles at regular intervals while seated.
- e. Walk about the cabin periodically and when flight conditions permit.
- f. Do not sleep in a cramped position and avoid the use of sleep aids.
- g. Drink adequate amounts of water, milk and fruit juices to maintain good hydration. Avoid or minimize dehydrating drinks such as alcohol or caffeinated beverages.

If there are risk factors as mentioned above, additional preventive measures may be considered for you, including taking a baby aspirin one hour before traveling or an anticoagulant (blood thinner) medication. I will gladly discuss your particular situation during your office visit.

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