

Self-Care for Phlebitis

It is common to develop phlebitis, also called “trapped blood”, following vein procedures. Blood that becomes trapped in closing veins as they heal can cause tender, lumpy areas in treated veins. You may notice one or more areas of pain, redness and swelling, which is usually delayed by several days to weeks after your procedure. **Call the office for an appointment if you are having significant pain or extreme discomfort.** Your provider may offer a puncture aspiration procedure to hasten your recovery. This procedure removes retained coagulum or “trapped blood” from the vein in order to reduce inflammation.

The following are home measures to care for yourself:

1. You may want to begin taking an over-the-counter pain medication such as acetaminophen (Tylenol) or an NSAID (Ibuprofen, Advil, Motrin, Aleve, Naproxen). NSAIDs tend to be more effective at reducing the inflammation that causes pain. Always check with your primary care provider before taking any new medication. Do not use NSAIDs while taking a blood thinner. Consult the medication packaging instructions regarding maximum dosing or ask your pharmacist. Using this medication daily for 1-2 weeks can help reduce inflammation and speed your recovery even if it does not take the pain away entirely. Expect the pain to improve gradually over several weeks.
2. Warm compresses may lessen the symptoms related to phlebitis. Use water that is hot, but not scalding. Soak a towel in hot water and wring out the excess. Fold the towel into a square and apply to the painful area for up to 20 minutes at a time. If it feels too hot at any time, remove the towel immediately.
3. Elevate your legs as close to heart level as possible when you are able.
4. Continue to wear your compression stockings during the day as long as you are having pain or tenderness to the touch.
5. Continue walking a minimum of 40 min throughout the day as long as you are having discomfort.
6. **Call the office for an appointment if you experience increasing pain.** An US evaluation may be recommended by your provider to verify the source of pain and guide your treatment.

When should I call for help?

Call 911 anytime you think you may need emergency care. For example:

- You faint/pass out (lose consciousness).
- You have difficulty breathing or feel like you cannot catch your breath.
- You have sudden chest pain, shortness of breath, or you cough up blood.
- You have problems with your vision or balance.

Call the clinic or seek immediate medical care for:

- Significant pain or extreme discomfort.
- Sores or wounds at injection sites.
- Signs concerning for a deep blood clot (deep venous thrombosis or DVT):
 - Pain in your calf.
 - Generalized (overall) swelling in the leg, calf, ankle and/or foot. Particularly when the swelling is more noticeable in one leg when compared to the other.
- Signs concerning for infection:
 - Pus draining from the area of injection.
 - Fever.
 - Redness and pain that is expanding or spreading out around an injection site.

