

What is VTE?

Venous thromboembolism (VTE) is a common and preventable condition where a blood clot forms in a vein, usually in the legs but sometimes in the arms. VTE includes two main conditions:

1 DEEP VEIN THROMBOSIS (DVT)

A clot in the leg, thigh, or pelvis

2 PULMONARY EMBOLISM (PE)

When a clot breaks loose and travels to the lung

VTE is often underdiagnosed but serious, especially in people with cancer.

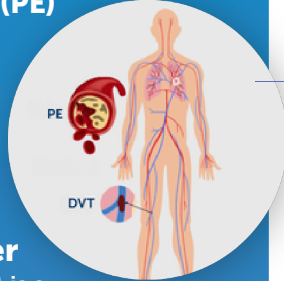
Why VTE Matters in Cancer

Cancer-associated VTE is not rare; it is a major complication of cancer and its treatment.

- 20–30% of all first VTE events are cancer-related
- Cancer patients have a 4 – 7x higher risk of developing VTE compared to people without cancer
- VTE is one of the leading causes of death in cancer patients outside of cancer progression itself
- Colorectal cancer is considered moderate to high risk for cancer-associated thrombosis compared to other tumor types

When is my risk highest?

- Early after diagnosis
- During active treatment
- After surgery
- After discharge



Why Colorectal Cancer Patients Are at Increased Risk?

Cancer creates a pro-thrombotic (hypercoagulable) state, a condition where blood has an increased tendency to form clots, leading to a higher risk of venous or arterial thrombosis. In CRC specifically:

Tumor-related factors

- Tumor cells can trigger blood clotting
- Inflammation can make blood clot more easily
- Some colorectal tumors release substances that increase clot risk
- Advanced/metastatic disease increases risk

Treatment-related factors

- Major abdominal surgery (common in colorectal cancer)
- Chemotherapy (especially certain regimens)
- Central lines or ports
- Hospitalization and immobility
- Some treatments that block the growth of new blood vessels, may increase clot risk

Patient-related factors

- Older age
- Obesity
- Prior VTE
- Reduced mobility
- Comorbidities (cardiovascular disease, diabetes)

Prevention in CRC Patients

Surgical patients

- Standard care: blood thinners after surgery to help prevent clots
- Blood thinners may be continued for up to 4 weeks after major abdominal cancer surgery

Ambulatory patients on chemotherapy

- Doctors may use a tool (Khorana Score) to estimate clot risk before chemotherapy
 - It helps identify who may benefit from clot prevention
- People at higher risk may be offered preventive blood thinners

Signs and Symptoms

Many patients don't realize these symptoms are related to cancer risk and should feel empowered to discuss risk, options, and when to seek urgent care.

Possible DVT symptoms (usually in one leg)



Leg swelling



Warmth or redness



Pain or tenderness

Start the Conversation About Blood Clots

If you have colorectal cancer, it's important to talk to your care team about your risk for blood clots. You can use these questions to get started:

ASK YOUR DOCTOR:

- Am I at risk for a blood clot because of my cancer or treatment?
- Are there ways to help prevent a blood clot?
- What symptoms should I watch for?
- When should I call you — and when should I go to the emergency room?
- If I get a blood clot, how is it treated and for how long?

Get emergency help right away if you have:

- Sudden shortness of breath
- Chest pain
- Lightheadedness
- Rapid heart rate



These may be indications of a pulmonary embolism.



Bring this list to your next appointment or keep it on your phone so you don't forget.



Learn More:



colorectalcancer.org
Alliance Helpline 877-422-2030

The Colorectal Cancer Alliance is a national organization committed to ending colorectal cancer within our lifetime. We are your allies — a national network of passionate survivors, caregivers and advocates dedicated to helping you and your family navigate all aspects of the disease, from diagnosis and treatment to a lifetime of progression-free survival. We are a community of people eager to share experiences, address your concerns, and answer your questions. We understand the different stages of the colon cancer journey because we've been there. We are here for you when you need us because we believe tomorrow can't wait.