

# Superficial Thrombophlebitis

## What is superficial thrombophlebitis?

Superficial thrombophlebitis (ST or SVT) is a condition in which inflammation causes a blood clot to form in a vein near the surface of the body. Often it develops in varicose veins, usually in the leg or arm. Varicose veins are enlarged veins close to the surface of the skin.

## What is the cause?

Superficial thrombophlebitis occurs when a clot forms in a vein because blood flow in the vein slows down or stops. ST can occur after minor injury to a vein, for example, after a bruise or after you have had an IV (medicine or fluid given through a vein). It can also occur after intense exercise.

## What are the symptoms?

Symptoms of superficial thrombophlebitis may include:

- Tender cordlike vein that is very sensitive to touch or pressure
- Redness and warmth in the area around the vein
- Swelling in the area around the vein

## How is it diagnosed?

Your healthcare provider will ask about your symptoms and medical history and examine you. You may have an ultrasound or X-ray test to check for clots in deeper veins, which are more serious than problems with the superficial veins.

## How is it treated?

Your healthcare provider may recommend that you:

- Take an anti-inflammatory drug, such as aspirin or ibuprofen.
  - Check with your healthcare provider before you give any medicine that contains aspirin or salicylates to a child or teen. This includes medicines like baby aspirin, some cold medicines, and Pepto-Bismol. Children and teens who take aspirin are at risk for a serious illness called Reye's syndrome.
  - Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medicines (NSAIDs), such as ibuprofen and aspirin, may cause stomach bleeding and other problems. These risks increase with age. Read the label and take as directed. Unless recommended by your healthcare provider, do not take for more than 10 days for any reason.
- Put warm, moist compresses on the inflamed area. Be careful to avoid burns. If you are using a heating pad, do not lie on it.
- Wear compression stockings because they help keep the blood flowing normally through the legs.

Your provider may prescribe a blood thinner medicine, especially if you are at increased risk for developing a blood clot in a deep vein.

With proper treatment, ST usually lasts 1 to 2 weeks.

## **How can I take care of myself?**

Follow your healthcare provider's instructions. Ask your provider:

- How and when you will hear your test results
- How long it will take to recover
- What activities you should avoid and when you can return to your normal activities
- How to take care of yourself at home
- What symptoms or problems you should watch for and what to do if you have them

If you have varicose veins, ask your healthcare provider if you should wear special support stockings. Ask what type of stockings you may need, when you should start using them, and how often you should wear them.

Make sure you know when you should come back for a checkup.

## **How can I help prevent ST?**

Because superficial thrombophlebitis usually results from injury or illness, it's hard to prevent.

Developed by RelayHealth.

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