

How do other heart and blood vessel conditions affect my risk of vein disease?

Some types of heart and blood vessel increase your risk of developing blood clots in the deep veins of the legs ([deep vein thrombosis](#) , or DVT) that can travel to the lungs, causing a potentially deadly pulmonary embolism.

Women with [heart failure](#) , a weakened heart that cannot pump blood effectively, are at increased risk for developing blood clots because blood does not move as quickly through the body, and tends to pool in one place. Slow-moving blood is more likely to form clots. Women with heart failure have a 40% higher-than normal risk of DVT, and more than twice the normal risk of pulmonary embolism.

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One treatment for [heart valve disease](#) is a unique contributor to blood clot risk. Heart valve disease occurs when the valves that open and close to let blood in and out of the heart are damaged and no longer work properly. A woman with severe valve disease may have her natural valves replaced with prosthetic ones. Having a foreign object in the bloodstream (the prosthetic valve) makes blood clots more likely to form.

Other heart conditions, such as *atrial fibrillation* (a type of [heart rhythm problem](#)) and certain congenital (inborn) heart defects can also raise a woman's risk of blood clots. Women with an implanted [pacemaker](#)

also have a slightly higher-than normal risk of developing a DVT in the arms.

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How can I prevent vein disease if I have other kinds of heart and blood vessel disease?

If you have heart and blood vessel conditions that put you at risk for vein disease, it is especially important that you take steps to reduce your risk. You can prevent vein disease by making healthy lifestyle changes such as [quitting smoking](#) , maintaining a [healthy weight](#) , eating a [heart-healthy diet](#) , and getting regular exercise. You should also work with your doctor to get your DVT risk

factors under control, such as

[diabetes](#)

. See

[Preventing DVT: The Basics](#)

for steps you can take to lower your risk.

It is also very important that you stick to your treatment plan for your other conditions. This means taking your medication as prescribed and keeping all follow-up appointments with your doctors. Following your treatment plan closely can prevent blood clots from forming in the veins. All women with artery disease should take daily aspirin to prevent heart attack and stroke, but always talk to your doctor before starting an aspirin regimen. If you have heart failure, heart valve disease, or heart rhythm problems, you may also benefit from stronger blood-thinning drugs to prevent future heart problems and blood clots.

Because women with other forms of heart disease are at high risk for vein disease, you should also know how to recognize the [symptoms of vein disease](#) and seek treatment if you experience them. The earlier your disease is recognized, the better chance you have of avoiding a pulmonary embolism and other complications of vein disease.

References

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2. Heit JA, Silverstein MD, Mohr DN, Petterson TM, O'Fallon WM, Melton LJ, 3rd. Risk factors for deep vein thrombosis and pulmonary embolism: a population-based case-control study. *Arch Intern Med.* Mar 27 2000;160(6):809-815.

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