



Education

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, pelvis, or arm. Varicose veins are enlarged veins close to the surface.

How does it occur?

ST 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 pressure
- redness and warmth in the area around the vein
- swelling in the area around the vein.

How is it diagnosed?

Your health care provider will ask about your symptoms and examine you. He or she will be able to determine if you have ST from the physical exam. In some cases you may have special ultrasound or x-ray studies to check for clots in deeper veins.

How is it treated?

For treatment, your health care provider may recommend that you:

- Take an anti-inflammatory drug, such as aspirin or ibuprofen.
- Rest and elevate your arm or leg while you have pain and swelling, typically for 1 week.
- Put warm, moist compresses on the inflamed area (be careful to avoid burns).

How long will the effects last?

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

How can I take care of myself?

- Follow your health care provider's instructions.
 - Ask if you may do exercises in bed and how soon you may start taking daily walks.
 - If you have varicose veins, ask your health care provider if you should wear special support stockings.
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How can I help prevent ST?

Because ST usually results from injury, it is hard to prevent.

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