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**Superficial Thrombophlebitis**

**Other Names:** Venous thrombosis

**What is superficial thrombophlebitis?**

Superficial thrombophlebitis refers to inflammation and small blood clots in a vein just below the surface of the skin.

**What causes superficial thrombophlebitis?**

Usually, blood flow in a superficial vein becomes restricted for some reason, which causes clotting. The blood in the vein is trapped and can't return to the heart. Fluid is forced into the local tissues, which causes the swelling.

**What are the risks of superficial thrombophlebitis?**

Superficial thrombophlebitis is usually only a nuisance that goes away in a few weeks. Complications are rare, but can include infections, gangrene (death of the tissue), and a more serious condition called deep-vein thrombosis (DVT). Untreated infections can lead to blood poisoning.

**Who is at risk?**

Individuals who are required to sit, stand, or lie down for extended periods of time are at increased risk. Other risk factors include smoking, taking birth-control pills, pregnancy, and varicose veins. Superficial thrombophlebitis can result from an IV (intravenous) line, or other trauma to the vein.

**What are the symptoms of superficial thrombophlebitis?**

Redness and inflammation in the area of the affected vein. Tenderness and pain in the area of the affected vein. Hardness of the affected vein.

**How is superficial thrombophlebitis diagnosed?**

The doctor will examine the affected area. If the cause of the symptoms are not obvious, the doctor may order tests, including doppler ultrasound (a test that uses sound waves to build pictures), laboratory blood tests, or arteriography (x-ray pictures of blood vessels).

**How is superficial thrombophlebitis treated?**

Superficial thrombophlebitis usually goes away in a few weeks, but the hardness of the vein often remains for some time.

Your doctor may prescribe medications to reduce the inflammation, to prevent blood clots from forming, or to manage pain. Your doctor may recommend elevation of the extremity to reduce swelling, or the use of support stockings or other supporting body

wraps. If an infection is present, your doctor may prescribe antibiotics.

In rare cases, the doctor may recommend surgery to remove or bypass the affected vein.

**Can superficial thrombophlebitis be prevented?**

Some risk factors, like smoking or taking birth control pills, can be removed. If you're confined to bed rest, move your extremities frequently. Close monitoring of IV lines and prompt removal at the first sign of symptoms can help prevent the condition. For some patients who will be hospitalized for an extended period, medications, support stockings or compression boots are used.

Please ask us any questions you have about this condition.