



**Dr Oseka Onuma**  
**Gynaecologist & Pelvic Reconstructive Surgeon**

## ***Deep Venous Thrombosis (DVT)***

As the world becomes more globalized and traveling becomes easily accessible to most people, we face diseases that may result from travel. Deep Venous Thrombosis (DVT), also referred to as ***Venous Thromboembolism (VTE)***, is undoubtedly a disease that can be deadly for an individual. It is therefore important for patients intending to travel abroad.

DVT results from many factors that can easily occur in travelers during flights lasting longer than 3 hours. Although the risk of DVT is not very high, occurring generally in about one in every six thousand people, ***risk factors*** such as age, obesity, pregnancy, smokers or people who have had certain surgical procedures like hip or knee replacements, or abdominal surgeries may increase the risks of DVT.

Some cancers such as lung, ovarian and breast cancers have been shown to increase the risks as well as anyone having undergone chemotherapy. Certain heart conditions, high blood pressure or cardiovascular disease, bowel diseases and other gastrointestinal conditions can increase the risk as well.

A prime candidate for DVT might be also be a person with varicose veins who takes a flight longer than 3 hours in an air-conditioned environment that causes dehydration, who failed to ingest liquids, thereby avoiding frequent bathroom visits.

DVT results from a ***blood clot*** in the deep veins of the lower extremities, producing intense pain in the calves and extreme swelling in the limbs.

This swelling may progress from the feet up to the thighs. This phenomenon may not appear for up to 48 hours after a trip. Although there is an immediate concern of pain and swelling, blood clots are not the real causes of concern per se.

***However***, if a clot in a vein breaks off and travels to the arteries of the lung in the form of a pulmonary embolism, this may quickly lead to death or may result in many serious complications that require immediate hospitalization in the Intensive Care Unit.

***PTO***

*The following recommendations are specifically designed to prevent DVT:*

**The day before traveling:**

Make sure you walk throughout the day. This should not be difficult since you likely have many errands to run before your trip.

Do not forget to take the medications you usually take.

If you regularly use a diuretic, ask your doctor if you can skip it just for this day before travel in order to avoid dehydration.

Take a lot of fluids 24 hours before the trip.

The use of anti-clotting agents (anticoagulants) or anti-platelet agents must only be used as indicated by the treating physician.

**The day of travel:**

Make sure you use comfortable, loose-fitting clothing that is not tight around the waist.

Avoid using high-heeled shoes to prevent swollen feet.

Make sure you take liquids throughout the day so your bloodstream can become thinner, forcing you to get up and walk to the bathroom during the flight.

Avoid postures that obstruct blood flow back from your legs such as sitting with your legs bent or crossed.

Make sure that you walk frequently along the aisle at least every 3-4 hours.

If your legs are prone to swelling, elastic socks are recommended.

Stretching exercises are recommended, such as standing on your heels or toes.

If you have suffered previously from leg thrombosis, ask your doctor if you should take any additional precautions.