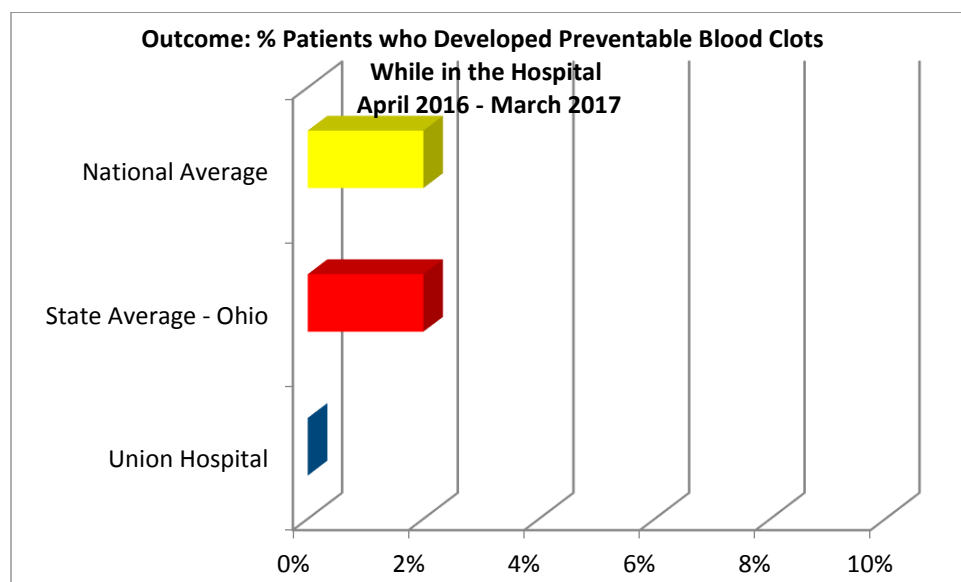


Deep vein thrombosis is the medical term for blood clots in the deep veins of the leg. Deep vein thrombosis, or “DVT” for short, can be dangerous. If a blood clot forms inside a blood vessel, it can clog the vessel and keep blood from getting where it needs to go. When that happens to one of the veins deep within the leg, blood can back up and cause swelling and pain.

Another problem with blood clots in veins is that they can travel to other parts of the body and clog blood vessels there. Blood clots that form in the legs, for example, can end up blocking blood vessels in the lungs. This can make it hard to breathe and sometimes, when they are large, can lead to death. When blood clots travel to the lungs doctors call it “pulmonary embolism” or “PE.”

Hospitalized patients are at risk for DVTs because of immobility and underlying diseases such as infections, heart and breathing problems and cancer; and procedures such as surgery. Patients who come into the hospital are evaluated for their risk of developing a DVT and measures such as compression stockings, activity are taken and medications called anticoagulants are prescribed to prevent DVT.

The following graph shows Union Hospital’s performance in preventing DVT in hospitalized patients. A lower incidence is desired.



Blood clots can occur in non-hospitalized patients as well. It is important to know the symptoms of DVT

- Swelling
- Pain
- Warmth and redness in the involved leg

If you think you have a blood clot in your leg, call your doctor or nurse right away. Blood clots in the veins near the surface of the skin are less dangerous. But blood clots in the deep veins of the leg are more serious. Your doctor or nurse can run tests to find out if you do have a clot that needs to be treated.

Symptoms of blood clots in the lungs or pulmonary embolism (PE) are:

- Panting, shortness of breath, or trouble breathing
- Sharp, knife-like chest pain when you breathe in or strain
- Coughing or coughing up blood
- A rapid heartbeat

If you Have any of these symptoms, especially if they happen over a short period of time (hours or days) or get worse quickly, call 911. At the hospital, doctors can run tests to find out if you do have a clot. Blood clots in the lungs can lead to death. That's why it's important to act fast and find out if there is a clot.