

Recommended Practices for Prevention of Deep Vein Thrombosis

The following Recommended Practices for Prevention of Deep Vein Thrombosis were developed by the AORN Recommended Practices Committee and have been approved by the AORN Board of Directors. They were presented as proposed recommendations for comments by members and others. They are effective March 1, 2011.

These recommended practices are intended as achievable recommendations representing what is believed to be an optimal level of practice. Policies and procedures will reflect variations in practice settings and/or clinical situations that determine the degree to which the recommended practices can be implemented.

AORN recognizes the various settings in which perioperative nurses practice. These recommended practices are intended as guidelines adaptable to various practice settings. These practice settings include traditional operating rooms (ORs), ambulatory surgery centers, physicians' offices, cardiac catheterization laboratories, endoscopy suites, radiology departments, and all other areas where surgery and other invasive procedures may be performed.

Purpose

The purpose of these recommended practices is to guide perioperative RNs by providing a framework for developing a protocol for deep vein thrombosis (DVT) prevention. These recommended practices provide guidance for administering pharmacologic and/or mechanical DVT prophylaxis and patient and health care personnel education. Although the prevention of DVT and pulmonary embolism (PE) should be a priority of the entire health care organization, the particular risks facing perioperative patients makes it imperative that perioperative RNs take an active role in DVT prevention. The patient in the perioperative environment may present with or encounter one or more of the three primary causative factors of DVT formation (ie, venous stasis, vessel wall injury, hypercoagulability).¹ The risk for DVT may be elevated for all perioperative patients, including children, because of immobility, tissue trauma, and surgical positioning requirements.¹⁻⁸ Deep vein thrombosis usually occurs in the lower extremities but also may occur in the upper extremities.⁹ Prevention of DVT reduces the potential for associated complications such as post-thrombotic syndrome and PE.^{10,11}

The perioperative nursing care interventions related to the treatment of complications of DVT (eg, venous stasis ulcers or their postoperative treatment, post-thrombotic syndrome, PE) are beyond the scope of this document. The choice of DVT prophylaxis is a medical decision and is beyond the scope of this document.

Recommendation I

A health care organization-wide protocol for the prevention of DVT that includes care of the perioperative patient should be developed and implemented.^{12,13}

Using an organization-wide protocol developed from evidence-based, professional guidelines and providing alternative treatment considerations prompts health care providers to give consistent and appropriate DVT prophylactic care.¹³ In a study of 150 hospitals, Maynard concluded that a protocol including a risk assessment and physician orders for venous thromboembolism (VTE) prevention accelerated improvements in VTE prophylaxis efforts.¹⁴ Integration of the health care organization's protocol into all physician orders provides consistency between all care providers and increases use of the protocol.^{12,13,15}

- I.a. The health care organization-wide DVT protocol should be developed by a multidisciplinary team that includes key stakeholders including, but not limited to,
- RNs;
 - physicians;
 - anesthesia professionals;
 - pharmacists; and
 - personnel from
 - quality/risk management,
 - information technology (IT), and
 - administration.¹³

Key stakeholders' acceptance of the protocol is improved if they are involved in the decision-making process.¹³ Each key stakeholder provides knowledge and expertise according to his or her area of practice and responsibility. The perioperative RN is a key stakeholder as a primary professional involved in implementing the protocol in the perioperative area and provides