Deep vein thrombosis (DVT)
ICD-10-CM
Clinical overview

Definitions
- **Deep vein thrombosis (DVT):** The presence of a blood clot in a deep vein
- **Thrombophlebitis:** Inflammation of a vein caused by or associated with a blood clot
- **Thrombus:** A blood clot that develops inside a blood vessel and stays in place
- **Embolus:** A blood clot that develops inside a blood vessel and subsequently breaks loose and travels to another location
- **Pulmonary embolus (embolism):** A deep vein thrombosis that breaks loose and travels to the lungs

Additional background
A blood clot occurs when blood thickens from a liquid state and hardens into a solid mass.

Most blood clots form in the lower extremities, but they can form in the upper extremities or other locations.

Blood clots can form in superficial veins that are close to the surface, but these are usually not dangerous, as they do not break loose and travel to other locations.

Causes
- Damage to the inner lining of a vein (due to injury, inflammation, immune response, etc.)
- Sluggish blood flow (due to prolonged inactivity, such as immobility after surgery or prolonged sitting while traveling)
- Any condition that causes blood to be thicker than normal (e.g., certain medications or medical conditions that increase blood clotting)

Signs and symptoms of current DVT/thrombophlebitis
Often, there are no signs or symptoms. Typically, signs and symptoms develop when there is inflammation associated with the deep vein thrombosis (this is known as thrombophlebitis). These symptoms may include:
- Edema (swelling) of affected extremity
- Pain or tenderness in the affected extremity (positive Homans’ sign—pain in the calf or behind the knee with passive flexion of the foot in an upward direction—may indicate the presence of a deep vein thrombosis)
- Increased warmth or redness

Diagnostic tools
- Medical history and physical exam
- Ultrasound/Doppler
- Venography (dye is injected into the vein followed by X-ray of the extremity)
- D-dimer test (measures a substance in the blood that is released when a blood clot dissolves)
- MRI and CT scanning are used less frequently

Main goals of treatment
- Prevent blood clot from enlarging
- Prevent blood clot from breaking loose and traveling to another location
- Prevent future blood clots

Treatment
Medications
- Anticoagulants (blood thinners) decrease the blood’s clotting ability and prevent existing clots from getting bigger (blood thinners do not break up existing clots; existing clots usually dissolve with time). Anticoagulant therapy may be used for three to six months or longer, or indefinitely, to prevent recurrence of blood clots.
  Anticoagulants include:
  - Heparin – acts immediately to thin the blood
  - Coumadin/warfarin – starts to work within three to four days
  - Low-molecular-weight heparins (enoxaparin/Lovenox, dalteparin/Fragmin or tinzaparin/Innohep)
  - Newer drug therapies, such as rivaroxaban (Xarelto) and apixaban (Eliquis)
- Thrombin inhibitors interfere with the blood-clotting process; they may be used for patients who cannot take heparin.
- Thrombolitics break up blood clots quickly; they are used only in life-threatening situations, as they can cause sudden bleeding.

Compression stockings

Vena cava filter (to catch clots that break loose to prevent them from traveling to the lungs or other locations)

Surgery to remove clot (rarely used)
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Subjective
The subjective section of the office note should document the presence of any current symptoms related to deep vein thrombosis (e.g., pain, swelling, redness, etc.).

Objective
The objective section of the office note should include any current associated physical exam findings (e.g., edema, redness, warmth, related diagnostic testing results, etc.).

Assessment
Specificity:
Describe each final diagnosis to the highest level of specificity, for example:
- Acute versus chronic
- Recurrent
- Exact location
  - Upper or lower extremity, calf, thigh, etc.
  - Laterality (left, right or bilateral)
  - Affected vein (femoral, tibial, etc.)

Abbreviations:
A good rule of thumb for any medical record is to limit—or avoid altogether—the use of abbreviations. While DVT is a commonly accepted medical abbreviation for deep vein thrombosis, best documentation practice is as follows:
- The initial notation of an abbreviation should be spelled out in full with the abbreviation in parentheses—e.g., “deep vein thrombosis (DVT).”
- Subsequent mention of the condition can be made using the abbreviation or acronym.
- The diagnosis should be spelled out in full in the final assessment.

Acute versus chronic
The American Heart Association advises generally a thrombus is referred to as “acute” within the first two weeks after the thrombus forms; “subacute” when more than two weeks and potentially up to six months after thrombus forms; or “chronic” once the thrombus is more than six months old.
- However, a coder cannot apply these time frames to determine whether to code DVT as acute or chronic.
- Rather, code assignment is strictly based on the specific DVT description documented in the medical record.

Current versus “history of”
- A current DVT should not be described anywhere in the record as “history of” DVT. In diagnosis coding, the description “history of” means DVT is historical and no longer exists.
- A deep vein thrombosis that occurred in the past and is no longer present should not be documented in the final assessment as if it is current (assessment: “DVT”). Rather, in this scenario, it is appropriate to describe DVT as “history of” along with specification that the condition is no longer current.

Suspected versus confirmed
- Do not document a suspected deep vein thrombosis as if it were confirmed. Instead, document the signs and symptoms in the absence of a confirmed diagnosis.
- Do not describe a confirmed DVT with terms that imply uncertainty (such as “probable,” “apparently,” “likely” or “consistent with”).

Plan
Document a specific and concise treatment plan for DVT, including the purpose of any associated long-term anticoagulant therapy and the date of the patient’s next appointment.

Long-term (current) anticoagulant therapy
Current long-term anticoagulant treatment related to DVT should be clearly linked to the DVT diagnosis with clear indication of the purpose of this therapy in the individual case, i.e., active treatment of a current DVT versus prophylactic treatment related to a historical DVT (to prevent a recurrence).
- Chronic anticoagulant therapy does not equal a diagnosis of chronic DVT; and current chronic anticoagulation therapy does not make a DVT chronic.
  - Anticoagulation therapy is a medical treatment; whereas chronic DVT is a medical condition.
  - Further, chronic anticoagulation therapy is a long-term treatment that can be used for both current and historical DVTs.
- Chronic anticoagulant therapy does not represent a coagulation defect.
  - The blood-thinning action of the anticoagulant is the desired therapeutic effect of the medication and should not be coded as a coagulation defect.
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DVT versus thrombophlebitis
DVT can occur with or without inflammation.
- Deep vein thrombosis is rarely an acute finding without the associated inflammation that occurs with thrombophlebitis.
- Do not document simply “DVT” when there is also associated thrombophlebitis. Document both conditions to the highest level of specificity. Example: “Acute DVT of the right femoral vein with associated thrombophlebitis.”

Electronic medical record (EMR) reminder
- Some electronic medical records insert ICD-10-CM code descriptions into the medical record to represent the final diagnosis. Example: “I82.599 Chronic embolism and thrombosis of other specified deep vein of unspecified lower extremity.”
- This diagnosis description is incomplete and nonspecific. The healthcare provider should specify the particular deep vein that is affected and the specific extremity.

Note: ICD-10-CM is a statistical classification; it is not a substitute for a healthcare provider’s final diagnostic statement. It is the healthcare provider’s responsibility to offer legible, clear, concise and specific documentation of a final diagnosis, which is then translated to a code for reporting purposes. It is not appropriate for healthcare providers to simply list a code number or select a code number from a list of codes in place of a written final diagnosis.
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Tips and resources for coders

Coding basics
For accurate and specific diagnosis code assignment:
- Review the entire medical record to verify DVT is a current condition and not historical.
- Note the exact description of the DVT or related condition documented in the medical record; then, in accordance with ICD-10-CM official coding conventions and guidelines:
  - Search the alphabetic index for that specific description.
  - Verify the code in the tabular list, following all instructional notes.

Phlebitis and thrombophlebitis
- Phlebitis and thrombophlebitis of deep vessels of the lower extremities classify to category I8Ø. Fourth, fifth and sixth characters specify the exact location, including the blood vessel affected and laterality. Be sure to review all instructional notes.
- Category I8Ø excludes (Excludes1) venous embolism and thrombosis of lower extremities (I82.4-, I82.5-, I82.81-). An Excludes1 note indicates that the code excluded should not be used at the same time as the code above the Excludes1 note.
- When a final diagnosis is stated simply as “DVT” but the body of the record documents signs and symptoms that are associated with thrombophlebitis (swelling, erythema, pain and induration), the physician should be queried for clarification and an addendum/correction created when indicated.

Deep vein thrombosis (DVT) lower extremity – chronic
- Chronic embolism and thrombosis of deep veins of the lower extremities classify to subcategory I82.5. Fifth and sixth characters are required to specify the particular vein affected and laterality (right, left, bilateral or, unspecified).
- There are no specific timelines for when DVT becomes chronic. Code assignment is based solely on the physician’s specific description of the condition.

Deep vein thrombosis (DVT) upper extremity
- Acute and chronic embolism and thrombosis of deep veins of the upper extremity classifies to subcategories I82.6 (acute) and I82.7 (chronic), with fifth and sixth characters required to specify the site (the particular deep vein affected and laterality).

Long-term anticoagulation therapy
- Z79.Ø1 is assigned for long-term (current) use of anticoagulants.
- Query the physician when a medical record documents long-term anticoagulant therapy related to DVT but does not indicate whether this therapy is being used as active treatment of a current acute / sub-acute / chronic DVT versus prophylactic treatment of a historical DVT with the goal of preventing recurrence.
- Chronic anticoagulant therapy does not equal chronic DVT and does not represent a coagulation defect.
  - Anticoagulation therapy is a medical treatment; whereas chronic DVT is a medical condition.
  - Chronic anticoagulation therapy is a long-term treatment that can be used for both current and historical DVTs.
  - The blood-thinning action of the anticoagulant is the desired therapeutic effect of the medication and should not be coded as a coagulation defect.

History of DVT
- Z86.718 represents a personal history of venous thrombosis and embolism.

References: American Heart Association; American Hospital Association Coding Clinic; ICD-10-CM Official Guidelines for Coding and Reporting; Mayo Clinic; MedlinePlus; Merck Manual; National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute
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#### Coding examples

| Example 1 | Medical record documentation | Presents for anticoagulant follow-up for deep vein thrombosis (DVT). Exam findings are unremarkable. INR (international normalized ratio) is therapeutic at 2.8. Continue current Coumadin dose: 5mg M-W-F, 2.5 mg others. Written instructions reviewed with and given to patient. Recheck 1 month. | Final diagnosis | Long-term anticoagulant therapy for DVT | ICD-10-CM code | Z97.01 Longterm (current) use of anticoagulants | Comments | Documentation is vague and ambiguous. The coder should query the physician for clarification regarding whether Coumadin therapy is being administered as active treatment of a current deep vein thrombosis versus prophylactic treatment of a historical deep vein thrombosis with the goal of preventing a recurrence. Without the benefit of provider query, the only code that can be assigned is Z79.01.
Best documentation practice is for the physician to describe the DVT to the highest level of specificity (e.g., acute, chronic, recurrent, historical, exact location including laterality). |
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| Example 2 | Medical record documentation | Presents with chief complaint of swelling in right leg with calf tenderness for past two days. Asymmetric swelling with the right leg measuring close to 42 cm, the left measuring at 37 cm. Positive Homans’ sign. Stat venous Doppler shows deep vein thrombosis in the right posterior tibial. Negative left leg venous Doppler. Started on Coumadin 5 mg daily and Lovenox 80 mg subcutaneous twice daily until international normalized ratio is therapeutic between 2 and 3. | Final diagnosis | Acute right posterior tibial DVT | ICD-10-CM code | I82.441 Acute embolism and thrombosis of right tibial vein | Comments | Documentation clearly supports the presence of a current, acute DVT with a specific site noted. Specific documentation leads to a complete and accurate representation of the patient’s condition. |
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| Example 3 | Medical record documentation | 65-year-old female presents for routine follow-up for hypertension. States home blood pressure monitor shows blood pressure running in the 120s over high 80s. Blood pressure in the office today 129/88. Reports headaches have resolved. Has history of deep vein thrombosis left leg 8 months ago; Coumadin therapy was discontinued two weeks ago. Return to office in 2 months. Continue to monitor; record home blood pressure readings and bring record to next visit. | Final diagnosis | Hypertension controlled. History of deep vein thrombosis | ICD-10-CM code | I10 Essential (primary) hypertension Z86.718 Personal history of other venous thrombosis and embolism | Comments | History of DVT codes to Z86.718. |
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| Example 4 | Medical record documentation | Patient is here today for follow-up related to deep vein thrombosis in the left leg diagnosed four months ago. Was started on regular daily Coumadin therapy at that time. No redness or inflammation in left leg today; swelling has decreased. INR (international normalized ratio) today is 2.4. Doppler ultrasound today shows deep venous thrombosis in left leg is slowly resolving. Continue current daily Coumadin dosing as directed. Recheck INR in 4 weeks. | Final diagnosis | Chronic deep venous thrombosis of left lower extremity | ICD-10-CM code | I82.502 Chronic embolism and thrombosis of unspecified deep veins of left lower extremity Z79.01 Long term (current) use of anticoagulants | Comments | DVT is clearly described as “chronic”. The provider did not specify the affected vein. |