



University of North Carolina Wilmington
Abrons Student Health Center

INSTRUCTION SHEET: SUPERFICIAL THROMBOPHLEBITIS

The Student Health Provider has diagnosed superficial thrombophlebitis: Inflammation and clots are present in superficial (near the skin's surface) veins.

Symptoms include swelling, redness, warmth, and tenderness-to-touch over the affected vein. The vein often feels like a hard piece of string under the skin.

Inflammation in the veins usually goes away in one to two weeks; the firm cord feeling can remain longer.

Superficial thrombophlebitis is *not* a dangerous condition: The clots in superficial thrombophlebitis do not break off and go to the lungs (clots that form *deep* in the body can break off, travel to the lungs, and cause a serious condition called pulmonary embolus).

Clots in superficial veins can be recurrent (happen again). Inactivity (lack of exercise), being overweight, and smoking increase the chances of getting clots again.

MEASURES YOU SHOULD TAKE TO HELP TREAT YOUR THROMBOPHLEBITIS:

1. *Rest* and *elevate* the affected body part. Elevation helps minimize swelling and discomfort.
2. Apply heat to the area three to four times a day. Soak in a warm tub or apply a warm compress 30 minutes. Make a warm compress by soaking a towel in very warm water. Wrap the towel around the affected part. Cover the towel with plastic wrap to keep heat in longer.
3. If anti-inflammatory medicines such as naproxen, ibuprofen, or prescription medications are recommended or prescribed, take the medicine as directed. Anticoagulants (blood thinners) are not typically used to treat superficial thrombophlebitis.
4. If your condition worsens, return to the Student Health Center or see another medical provider *promptly*. Specifically, seek care if the affected area is increasing in size or redness, or if you get whole-body symptoms such as fever and chills, chest pain, shortness of breath, or cough with bloody sputum.
5. Schedule a follow-up appointment with the Student Health Center or your personal/referral provider as directed. Your provider can provide ongoing care for this episode, evaluate the cause of this episode if needed, and help you prevent future episodes.
6. If you smoke, STOP! If you are overweight, contact the Campus Dietician at 910-962-7621 to help you lose weight.