

HEALTH

If You Use Birth Control, Learn Your Risk for Blood Clots

NewsUSA

(NU) - Nearly 60 million women of child bearing age in the U.S. use the birth control pill as their number-one contraceptive of choice.

While experts say that the pill is safe and effective, they also caution that birth control with estrogen, including the pill, patch, or ring, can pose serious risks, including dangerous blood clots in the legs or arms, and deadly blood clots in the lungs.

Birth control pills with estrogen increase a woman's risk for blood clots three-fold, and some of the newer birth control pills women use pose a risk two times greater than older birth control pills. The use of birth control patches and rings containing estrogen poses a risk double that of birth control pills. These risks are significantly increased in women who have other blood-clot risk factors, such as a genetic clotting disorder such as factor V Leiden, a previous blood clot, or a family history of blood clots.

This National Women's Health Week, the National Blood Clot Alliance and the Alexandra Rowan Foundation are urging women to recognize their blood-clot risk, particularly when making first-time decisions about birth control, and to talk with their doctors about ways to reduce their risk prior to taking hormonal birth control.

Women considering the use of hormonal birth control should know their risk for blood clots and take these steps to reduce their risk:

- Complete the Risk Assessment at the website www.womenandbloodclots.org and discuss their results with their doctor .

- Talk to their doctor about their existing risk for blood clots, in-



cluding personal or family history of blood clots.

- Talk to their doctor about contraceptive options to reduce blood-clot risks.

Recognize Blood Clots Signs & Symptoms

If you can recognize the signs and symptoms of blood clots in the legs or arms, you may be able to help save your life, or the life of a friend or family member:

- Swelling.
- Pain or tenderness not caused by an injury.
- Skin that is warm to the touch, red, or discolored.

Blood clots in the legs or arms that are left untreated, or that break apart and travel to your lung, can be deadly.

Symptoms of a blood clot in your lung may include:

- Difficulty breathing.
- Chest pain that worsens with a deep breath or cough, coughing up blood.
- Faster than normal or irregular heartbeat.

Seek immediate medical attention if you experience any of these signs or symptoms.

For more information, visit www.womenandbloodclots.org.