

Suspected Upper-Extremity Deep Vein Thrombosis

Deep vein thrombosis (DVT) occurs when there is a clot (<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info/bloodclot>) in a vein that is deep within your body. If this happens in your upper extremity (arm, wrist, or hand), it is called upper-extremity DVT. Causes of upper-extremity DVT include trauma, infection, inflammation, heart failure, pregnancy, and cancer. Symptoms may include upper-extremity swelling, pain or tingling, heaviness, or a feeling of “pins and needles.” Upper-extremity DVTs are sometimes associated with having a device in the body such as a catheter, pacemaker, or defibrillator. These upper-extremity DVTs often have no symptoms. It is important to diagnose DVT because it may need to be treated with blood thinners. To help in the diagnosis, a doctor may ask you about symptoms, do a physical examination, or use blood tests. Imaging tests are often needed to see the location and extent of the DVT.

For suspected upper-extremity DVT, initial imaging using ultrasound (<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info/us-carotid>) duplex Doppler of the upper extremity is usually appropriate. CT (<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info/headct>) of the upper extremity veins with intravenous contrast (a special dye injected into your blood) may be appropriate.

MRI (<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info/mri-brain>) of the upper extremity veins (MRV) without and with contrast or MRV of the upper extremity without contrast may also be appropriate.

For more information, see the Blood Clots (<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info/bloodclot>) page.

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