

Script – Broadcast – Getting a leg up on blood clots

INTRO

During his 14-year career in the NFL, Deion “Prime Time” Sanders was known for his silky moves on the football field. But now the 55-year-old college football coach has been slowed, due in large part to blood clots he’s suffered over the years.

Sanders was back in the news recently due to surgery he had on blood clots in both legs. It’s not his first go-around with this serious health issue. In 2021 he had two toes amputated due to clots.

Blood clots can happen to anyone. Deep vein thrombosis (DVT) is a blood clot located in a deep vein, usually in a leg or arm. A pulmonary embolism (PE) is a blood clot that has traveled from a deep vein to a lung. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 900,000 people suffer from a blood clot each year and 100,000 people die. About 30% of people who have had a DVT or PE are prone to a recurrence.

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Risk factors for blood clots vary. They include being older, overweight, a family history, illnesses such as cancer or heart disease, being sedentary due to surgery, confined to a bed or paralysis.

About half of people with DVT exhibit no symptoms. For those who do, warning signs include swelling, pain, tenderness or redness of the skin. The same goes for PE. But if you’re experiencing trouble breathing, fast heartbeat, chest pain, coughing blood or light headedness, Dr. Samantha Cox, a vascular surgeon with OSF HealthCare, says seek help immediately.

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Dr. Samantha Cox, vascular surgeon, OSF HealthCare

“Blood clots are common, especially in an aging population or if you have certain risk factors. Many patients have no idea that they have an underlying blood clotting disorder. Other people have what we call an acquired thrombotic state or pro thrombotic state; maybe they’re a smoker, maybe they’re obese or have diabetes, all those things will put them at a slightly increased risk for blood clotting. Also, use of any medications for example, hormonal medications, are known medications that may cause increased risk of blood clotting.” (:34)

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Blood clots can be treated. Many patients are placed on blood thinners long term to prevent future clots. Compression stockings are often recommended to prevent DVT and relieve pain and swelling. In the most serious cases, clots are removed surgically, such as the case with Sanders.

And while he avoided amputation this time, Sanders still has a long road to travel including medication and regular follow-up with his physician.