

FIGURE 7.**PATIENT TIP SHEET: PREVENTING BLOOD CLOTS AND CARDIOVASCULAR EVENTS**

Patients with cancer, particularly MM, are at high risk of developing blood clots (thromboembolic events) and heart problems, or experiencing worsening of preexisting heart problems. If you have MM, you may be able to prevent blood clots or improve your outcomes if you get blood clots or have heart problems. You can learn how to recognize the symptoms of blood clots early enough to improve the likelihood of successful treatment and decrease the likelihood of complications. Since treatments for MM can increase the risk for blood clots and heart disease, your healthcare provider may change your treatment based on your symptoms.

TYPES OF THROMBOEMBOLIC EVENTS

- **DVT:** A small blood clot in the arm, leg, hand, or foot; DVT is the most common type of thromboembolic event. Signs of DVT include swelling, aching, pain, tightness, or a lump in the arm, leg, hand, or foot; fast heartbeat; and veins larger than usual (distended).
- **PE:** A blood clot that travels to the lungs. Signs of PE include anxiety, fast heartbeat and fast breathing, chest pain, new onset of shortness of breath, and coughing up blood.
- **Cerebral infarction (stroke):** The result of a blood clot that travels to the brain. Signs include change in emotional or mental behavior and confusion, severe headache, chest pain, loss of coordination, and sudden numbness or weakness.

TESTS THAT YOU MAY UNDERGO

To see if you may have a blood clot, your nurse or healthcare provider will perform tests, which may include:

- An ultrasound of your arms or legs if they are swollen or painful
- A test called a ventilation/perfusion scan, or VQ scan, that checks to see if there is a blockage in blood flow in your lungs
- A CT scan to look for a blood clot in your lungs. Tell your healthcare provider if you have kidney problems; the IV contrast dye may be hard on your kidneys.
- Electrocardiogram or echocardiogram

TREATMENT OF BLOOD CLOTS

- DVT, PE, and stroke are considered medical emergencies. Report any symptoms to your healthcare provider immediately.
- The treatments or medications you receive will be based on your individual risk factors.

- You may need to receive medications to prevent new blood clots from forming.
- Low-dose aspirin may be suggested if you have no risk factors for blood clots or only one risk factor.
- Pills or injectable anti-clotting drugs may be prescribed if you have more than one risk factor. Risk factors include lack of activity, obesity, smoking, personal or family history of blood clots, taking estrogen compounds (hormone replacement), taking drugs to increase the amount of red blood cells (e.g., erythropoietin, epoetin alfa, darbepoetin alfa), recent surgery, and prolonged air travel or sitting for long periods of time.

WAYS TO REDUCE YOUR BLOOD CLOT RISK

- Exercise, such as walking, ankle circles, and knee-to-chest lifts
- Weight loss
- Smoking cessation
- Take medications prescribed by your healthcare providers.
- Notify your healthcare providers if you have ever been diagnosed with a blood clot.
- Report concerning signs and symptoms immediately to your healthcare providers, including shortness of breath, chest pain or tightness, cough, or swelling of an extremity.

WAYS TO PREVENT HEART DISEASE

- The American Heart Association recommends regular activity or exercise to decrease your risk of blood clots and stroke and lower your blood pressure.
- Stop smoking if you already smoke, or do not start.
- Eat a healthy diet with more fruits and vegetables than oils, fats, and carbohydrates. People with a lower body mass index are less likely to have heart problems, diabetes, or high blood pressure.
- See a primary care provider for regular blood pressure, diabetes, and cholesterol monitoring.
- Remember that most patients with MM are living longer than ever. By staying as active as possible and leading a heart healthy lifestyle, you can reduce your risk of complications and stay as healthy as possible.

CT—computed tomography; DVT—deep vein thrombosis; MM—multiple myeloma; PE—pulmonary embolism

Note. Based on information from Elias et al., 2016; Rome et al., 2008; Story, 2015.