



Anticoagulants and Antiplatelets



taking blood thinners

If you have a mechanical heart valve, an arrhythmia or had a Fontan procedure, you need to take blood thinners.

These medicines are known as anticoagulants and antiplatelets.

They help decrease the risk of blood clotting in an artery, vein or your heart, or to keep an existing clot from getting bigger.

Clots can block the flow of blood to your heart or brain and cause a heart attack or stroke.

Anticoagulants

Medicine that is used to prevent unwanted blood clots from forming is known as an anticoagulant (or blood thinner). Warfarin (Jantoven®) is the most common anticoagulant.

- Take the medicine as directed.
- Have regular blood tests to make sure the level is right for you.
- Tell your doctors and your dentist that you take warfarin.
- Talk to your health care team or pharmacy before you take any other medicine (over-the-counter, vitamins or natural products). They can affect how well warfarin works.
 - Do not take herbal products, such as green tea, coenzyme Q, garlic, Ginkgo biloba, ginseng and St. John's wort. They can affect how well your medicine works.
- For pain relief, only take acetaminophen (Tylenol®).
 - Do not take aspirin, ibuprofen (Advil®, Motrin®, Nuprin®), naproxen (Aleve®) and other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (such as Midol®). NSAIDs can increase your risk of bleeding.



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- Eat a consistent diet to maintain a steady blood level of warfarin.
 - Green vegetables such as asparagus, avocado, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, chard, collard greens, endive, green onions, parsley, spinach, kale, lettuces and turnip greens have large amounts of vitamin K and will make warfarin less effective at preventing clots.
 - Cooking oils (olive, soybean and canola oils) have large amounts of vitamin K, as do mayonnaise and margarine.
- Do not drink alcohol, cranberry juice or grapefruit juice.
- Talk with members of your health care team about how to take warfarin if you are having surgery.

When To Call Your Doctor

- Call your doctor if you have:
- blood in your stool or urine
 - nosebleeds
 - bleeding from the gums when you brush your teeth
 - bleeding from cuts or other breaks in your skin
 - increased bruising
 - throwing up blood
 - dizziness or fainting
 - bad headache or stomachache that will not go away
 - periods that are heavier than normal.

Antiplatelets

Medicine to keep the platelets (cells in your blood) from grouping together is known as antiplatelets. This will lower your risk for stroke or heart attack. Aspirin is the most common antiplatelet.

- Buy aspirin over-the-counter. You do not need a prescription.
- Take aspirin as directed.
- You do not need testing to tell if the aspirin is working.
- Do not take aspirin with other blood thinners, unless your doctor says it's OK.
- Talk with members of your health care team about how to take aspirin if you are having surgery.



Blood Tests Needed for Warfarin

Once you start taking warfarin, you will need to have blood tests often to monitor your clotting time. This is done with a blood test called the INR (international normalized ratio) or CFX (chromogenic factor X).

You will need to have your INR/CFX checked at least every month. You may need to have it checked more often when you first start taking warfarin. Too much medicine can cause bleeding.

Keep all appointments to have your blood checked.

