

Anticoagulants and Antibiotics After Valve Surgery: What You Need To Know

Anticoagulants

Your doctor may prescribe medicine to prevent blood clots from developing in your artificial heart valve. These medicines are called anticoagulants. They increase the time it normally takes blood to clot.

To prescribe the right dose for you, your doctor will order special blood tests to monitor the time it takes for your blood to clot. It is very important to follow your doctor's instructions about follow-up visits for these needed blood tests.

You will also receive other instructions about:

- possible side effects of this medicine
- your dose
- how often and what time of day to take the medicine.

You will also need to tell your dentist and other doctors you are taking anticoagulant medicines. Since these medicines increase the time it normally takes blood to clot, you may be given special instructions about their use before dental work or surgery.

Antibiotics

Before you leave the hospital you will receive a special identification card that says you have an artificial heart valve.

Use this card to remind you, your dentist and other doctors that you need to take antibiotics before you have any dental work and any surgeries. The card lists the recommended antibiotics and appropriate dose.

Bacteria (germs) can be released into your bloodstream during some of these procedures and settle on your new heart valve. This infection is called bacterial endocarditis.

Taking antibiotics before dental work or surgery is needed to keep your new heart valve healthy and working well.