

Taking a Combination of Anticoagulant Medicines



Allina Health

General Information

Anticoagulant medicines may be prescribed if you have:

- a blood clot in your leg(s) or lung(s)
- heart problems, such as an abnormal heart rhythm, heart valve
- replacement or repair, heart failure, or blocked arteries
- had a stroke caused by a blood clot
- had surgery.

These medicines are important to prevent clots from forming and to treat any blood clot because it can break off and travel through your bloodstream. This can cause serious problems, including a stroke or heart attack. For this reason, it is important that you follow the medicine schedule your health care provider has prescribed for you.

What Are Anticoagulant Medicines?

Anticoagulant medicine helps prevent unwanted blood clots from forming or from growing larger. There are 2 types of anticoagulant medicines you will be taking at the same time:

- warfarin (Jantoven®)
 - a tablet taken by mouth
- rivaroxaban (XARELTO®)
 - a tablet taken by mouth
- fondaparinux (Arixtra®), dalteparin (Fragmin®) or enoxaparin (Lovenox®)
 - a shot (injection) given under the skin.

Taking these 2 anticoagulant medicines together is also known as anticoagulant therapy. (You may receive the shot at home or in your health care provider's office. Either you or a family member will learn how to give the shots at home.)

Why Are 2 Medicines Needed?

Once your blood starts to clot, your body wants to naturally keep clotting. Taking the anticoagulant medicines will keep more blood clots from forming.

Arixtra, Fragmin or Lovenox will work right away — within hours — to stop the growth of blood clots. Warfarin will take 3 to 4 days to start to control the development and growth of clots.

You may need to take both medicines until the warfarin is at a steady level that prevents clotting.

How Long Will You Have to Take the Medicines?

Your health care provider will tell you when to stop taking the injections of Arixtra, Fragmin or Lovenox. This will depend on the level of warfarin in your body. In general, you may need to continue the injections for at least 5 days.

What is the Blood Test for Warfarin?

Your health care provider wants to make sure that the amount of warfarin in your blood is at a steady level to prevent clotting. This is done with a blood test called the INR (international normalized ratio) or CFX (chromogenic factor X).

The INR/CFX will need to be checked often — likely every day — until your INR is at the right level before you can safely stop taking shots of Arixtra, Fragmin or Lovenox.

Your health care provider will tell you when you may stop taking the shots. Do not stop taking them on your own.

Your warfarin dose will be adjusted to keep your INR/CFX at the right level. Your INR/CFX goal will depend on your health. Use the charts in this booklet to track your INR/CFX results.

Once you are no longer taking the shots, you will likely stay on the warfarin for at least 3 months. (This time will depend on the reason for the blood clot.)

When do You Need to Take Anticoagulant Medicines?

■ Arixtra

- Take Arixtra 1 time a day.
- Take Arixtra at the same time every day.

■ Fragmin or Lovenox

- You will take Fragmin or Lovenox either 1 or 2 times a day.
- If you need to take it 2 times a day, be sure to spread out your doses by 12 hours.
- Take Fragmin or Lovenox at the same time(s) every day.

■ Warfarin

- Take warfarin 1 time a day.
- Take warfarin at the same time every day.
- A common time to take warfarin is with your evening meal. If this is not a good time, you may take it in the morning.

What do You Need to do if You Forget a Dose of Either Anticoagulant Medicine?

■ Arixtra

- If you forget a dose and it is within 6 hours of the time it was due, it is OK to give yourself a shot. If it is past 6 hours, skip the missed dose and tell your health care provider that you missed a dose.

- Get back on track with your next scheduled dose.
- Do not use extra medicine to make up for the missed dose.
- It is important to take only 1 dose a day.

■ **Fragmin or Lovenox**

- If you forget a dose and you are taking the Fragmin or Lovenox once a day, and it is within 6 hours of the time it was due, it is OK to give yourself a shot.
- If you forget a dose, and you are taking the Fragmin or Lovenox twice a day, skip a dose and get back on track with your next scheduled dose.
- Tell your health care provider that you missed a dose.

■ **Warfarin**

- If you forget a dose, do not double your next dose.
- Call your health care provider. They may want to adjust your next dose based on your most recent INR/CFX test.

Can You Become Pregnant While Taking Anticoagulant Medicines?

If you are a woman of childbearing age, it is important to use birth control while you are taking anticoagulant medicines. Warfarin can cause birth defects, especially if taken during the first three months of pregnancy.

If you are pregnant while you need anticoagulant medicine, talk with your health care provider about your medicine choices.

Also, tell your health care provider if you are breastfeeding.

Can You Take Other Medicines With the Anticoagulants?

Many medicines may interact (interfere) with warfarin. Most other medicines will increase the time it takes for your blood to clot and increase your risk for bleeding.

Tell your health care provider or clinic nurse about any prescription, over-the-counter, herbal, natural, dietary or vitamin supplements you are taking.

Ask your pharmacist which over-the-counter medicines are safe for you to take. Make sure they know you are taking warfarin.

- When using any over-the-counter product, read the ingredients label. **Do not use aspirin and products that contain aspirin or acetylsalicylic acid (another name for aspirin) without talking with your health care provider.**

Aspirin can increase the effects of warfarin. This can irritate your stomach lining and cause bleeding. Some common brand name products that contain aspirin include:

- Excedrin®
- Alka Seltzer®
- Anacin®
- Ascription®
- Aspergum®
- Bufferin®
- Dristan®
- Excedrin®

- Midol®
- Nytol®
- Pepto Bismol®
- Sominex®
- Ben Gay®.

Check the ingredients of generic products for aspirin or acetylsalicylic acid.

- Avoid taking nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medicines (known as NSAIDs), unless your doctor tells you it is OK. Common NSAIDs include:
 - ibuprofen (such as Advil®, Motrin®, Nuprin®, Nurofen®)
 - naproxen (such as Aleve®, Naprosyn®).
- You may use acetaminophen (Tylenol®) occasionally for headaches, muscle aches or fever. If you regularly take doses for several days, it may affect your INR results. Talk with your health care provider if you take acetaminophen every day for any symptoms.
- Ask your health care provider or pharmacist for suggested medicines for colds, allergies or heartburn.

What Should You Do if You Need to See Another Health Care Provider or Dentist?

It is important to tell your dentist and other health care providers you take anticoagulant medicine before planning any dental work or medical surgery or procedure.

This reminder will help them avoid prescribing or recommending medicines that may affect your body's blood clotting ability.

Do You Need To Change Your Activities While Taking Anticoagulant Medicine?

- You could bleed more easily from cuts or wounds while taking anticoagulant medicine.
 - Use caution around sharp objects.
 - Use an electric razor.
 - Be especially careful when working with knives and scissors.
- Wear slippers or shoes at all times, even while in the house.
- Trim your nails carefully. Trim them straight across with a nail clippers. Do not pick at the cuticle.
- Use a soft toothbrush. Gently brush and floss your teeth.
- Avoid activities that may increase your risk for injury, such as hunting and contact sports.

Are There Any Special Diet Limits With Anticoagulant Medicine?

- Arixtra, Fragmin and Lovenox are not affected by food.
- Warfarin is affected by foods that are high in vitamin K, especially green leafy vegetables. You do not need to avoid these foods, but it is important to eat a consistent amount of them.
- If your diet changes, talk with your health care provider. You may need to have more INR/CFX tests while your diet is changing.

Can You Drink Alcohol While Taking Anticoagulant Medicine?

Because you are taking anticoagulant medicines, you should avoid drinking alcohol. Alcohol may change the effects of the medicine and affect your judgment. This may put you at risk of harm.

What are the Side Effects of Anticoagulant Medicine?

Anticoagulant medicines increase your risk for bleeding. You may have some of these side effects:

■ Arixtra, Fragmin or Lovenox

- pain and irritation at the injection site
- bruising

■ Warfarin

- minor nosebleeds
- bleeding from the gums when you brush your teeth
- bleeding from a minor cut that lasts less than five minutes
- increased bruising
- increased menstrual flow.

When Should You Call Your Health Care Provider?

Call your health care provider if you have:

- spitting or coughing up blood
- unusual, unexplained, often or large areas of bruising
- red or dark brown urine
- red or tarry black stools
- bleeding from cuts that continues after applying pressure for 5 minutes
- nosebleeds that last longer than 5 minutes or that occur
- three or more times a week
- bleeding from your gums while brushing your teeth
- dizziness or weakness
- unusually heavy or long menstrual periods
- headaches that don't go away with medicine, rest or both
- swelling or pain anywhere (with or without bruising)
- any blow to your head or stomach that may cause internal bleeding.

Important Things To Remember When Taking Anticoagulant Medicines

- Take your medicines every day and stick to your schedule.
- Stop taking your medicine only when your health care provider tells you to.
- Keep your appointments for blood tests. The amount of warfarin in your blood will need to be checked to make sure it is at a steady level to prevent clotting. Your health care provider may want to check how your body is responding to the Arixtra, Fragmin or Lovenox.
- There are many medicines, foods, vitamins, herbs and nutritional supplements, as well as alcohol, that can change how well warfarin works in your body. Talk to your health care provider before making any changes to your diet and medicines.
- Because of the risk of serious bleeding, be extra careful to avoid injuries while taking these medicines.
- Call your health care provider if you have symptoms of an allergic reaction, serious bleeding, or any other symptoms concern you.

Anticoagulant Medicine Schedule

Date	<input type="checkbox"/> Arixtra dose <input type="checkbox"/> Fragmin dose <input type="checkbox"/> Lovenox dose	Warfarin Dose	INR/CFX Result

Record the anticoagulants when you take them each day.
Record your INR/CFX results each time your INR is tested.

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