

Patient Instructions For Coumadin Anticoagulation Therapy

What is an anticoagulant?

An anticoagulant is a drug which prevents harmful blood clots from forming or getting larger. The most common anticoagulants are heparin and Coumadin (warfarin). Some people refer to anticoagulants as "blood thinners."

What side effects can anticoagulants cause? (Side effects are not common.)

Fever	Pain, swelling, discomfort
Fatigue	Mouth sores
Chills	Rash
Sore Throat	Bleeding

What bleeding should I look for?

- Nosebleeds
- Bleeding gums
- Sudden appearance of bruises
- Vomiting or spitting up blood or brown material that resembles coffee grounds.
- Bloody or black, tarry stools
- Blood in the urine or red or dark-brown urine
- New or unexpected pain such as headaches, backaches, or stomach pain
- For women, heavier than usual menstrual bleeding (periods)

What should I do about side effects?

Call your doctor immediately. Do not take more anticoagulant before you speak with your doctor.

What should I do if I cut myself?

Hold pressure to the cut for 5 to 10 minutes with a clean dressing or cloth. If the cut is on the arm or leg, hold it above the heart level. If the bleeding is severe, call for help.

What special instructions should I follow while taking anticoagulants?

- Shave only with an electric razor.
- Use a toothbrush with soft bristles.
- Keep all appointments with your doctor and appointments for blood work.
- Avoid rough activities and rough sports.
- Carry identification stating that you are on an anticoagulant.
- Bathe without slippery bath oils, and use a rubber bath mat to prevent falls.
- Avoid sharp objects. Be extra careful when using kitchen knives.
- Call your doctor if you have vomiting, diarrhea, or fever that lasts longer than 24 hours.
- Call your doctor if you have any signs of bleeding.
- Reduce your chance of falls.
- Do not use power tools.
- Do not walk barefoot.
- Do not switch to a different brand of anticoagulant. It may be different in how it acts.
- Do **not** take **any medication** without first checking with your doctor. This includes:
 - Aspirin
 - Medicines which may contain aspirin
 - Anti-inflammatory drugs, including ibuprofen
 - Antacids
 - Cold and flu medicines

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- Sedatives
- Vitamins
- If you see other doctors or dentists, tell them you are taking an anticoagulant.

How can my doctor tell if the amount of anticoagulant I am taking is right?

Blood test can be done to measure the time it takes for your blood to clot. The amount you take can be adjusted, if necessary. This blood test is done frequently when the anticoagulant is started. Once the medicine is regulated, the blood tests are done less often. **It is very important to keep your appointments for these blood tests.**

How should I take this medicine?

- Follow your doctor's instructions carefully.
- Ask your doctor or pharmacist to explain anything you do not understand.
- Take your medicine at the same time every day to maintain a steady level in your blood.

How do I store this medicine?

Keep the medicine in the container it came in. Keep tightly closed. Keep out of reach of children. Store at room temperature and away from light.

For Coumadin, what time of the day is best to take my medicine?

Coumadin is taken once a day. Take it at the same time every day. Coumadin should be taken at 5 p.m., since most blood work is done in the morning.

If I am taking Coumadin, what should I do if I forget to take my medicine?

You may take a missed dose within eight hours of the time you usually take your medicine. After eight hours, **do not** make up the dose. Never double-dose. If you miss taking your medicine for two or more days, call your doctor.

If I am taking Coumadin, what special dietary instructions should I follow?

If you are taking Coumadin, be consistent every day with foods high in Vitamin K. Vitamin K affects the action of Coumadin. Some foods high in Vitamin K are:

- Beef and pork liver
- Broccoli
- Brussels sprouts
- Cauliflower
- Spinach
- Turnip greens

There are some herbal products which may interfere with Coumadin. Do not switch or change your diet without first talking with your doctor.

If I am taking Coumadin, what about drinking alcohol?

Alcohol may affect the action of Coumadin. Talk with your doctor about drinking alcohol.

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