



Catholic Home Care

Catholic Health Services

At the heart of health

Name: _____ Date: _____

Patient Teaching Guide for Patients on Anticoagulant Medicines

Your doctor has ordered an anticoagulant medicine for you called _____. These medicines are sometimes called blood thinners. They do not really “thin” the blood, but they do cause it to clot more slowly. This prevents harmful clots from forming in your arteries and veins. They can also prevent existing clots from getting larger. Your doctor has ordered a dose that keeps a balance between clotting and unnecessary bleeding. It is very important to follow all instructions exactly.

The following tips will help keep you safe while you are taking this important medicine.

- Take your pills at the same time every day. Do not skip a dose. If you miss taking a dose, try to take it within 8 hours of the regularly scheduled time. **Do not double a dose.** If you miss several doses in a row, call your doctor for instructions.
- Some medications can change the way your anticoagulant works in your body. It is important for your doctor to be aware of all medicines you are taking, even those that may be prescribed by another doctor. This includes those you can get at the store without a prescription (over the counter medicines). Contact your doctor before starting or stopping any medicines.
- Examples are:
 - Some antibiotics or medicines taken for seizures
 - Over the counter pain medicines such as aspirin, ibuprofen or naprosyn
 - Over the counter cold medicines
 - Antacids
 - Herbal medicines and vitamin supplements
- Notify your doctor immediately if you experience any of the following:

○ Nosebleeds	○ Feelings of being dizzy or faint
○ Bleeding gums	○ Weakness that you cannot explain
○ Red or brown urine	○ Bruises that do not heal, but get larger
○ Red or black bowel movements	○ More than your usual menstrual flow
○ Cuts that don't stop bleeding	○ Headaches or pain in the abdomen
- Inform all doctors, dentists, and other medical personnel that you are on anticoagulant therapy. Consider wearing a Medic-alert bracelet or carry a patient identification card.



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- Take extra care to avoid sports and activities that can cause falls, cuts, or bruises. Here are some examples of ways to keep yourself safe:
 - It's a good idea to use an electric razor
 - In order to prevent slipping and falling during your bath or shower, don't use bath oils. Use a non-slip mat in the bathtub.
 - Wear gloves while gardening or washing dishes and use knives and other sharp tools very carefully.
 - Avoid walking barefoot or using a razor blade or knife to trim calluses, corns, fingernails, or toenails.
- Use a soft bristle toothbrush and take special care while flossing your teeth. Have regular dental check-ups to prevent gum disease that might cause your gums to bleed.
- Inform your doctor if you are a frequent user of drinks with caffeine or alcohol, if you smoke, or if you use illegal drugs. These may affect the way your anticoagulant medicine works.
- If you are taking warfarin (Coumadin), have your blood tested as often as the doctor advises. This is how your doctor checks the balance between bleeding and clotting. Your doctor may change the dose according to the results of your blood test.
- If you are taking warfarin (Coumadin) it is important to keep your diet the same. The amount of vitamin K in food may affect the way your blood clots. You don't have to stop eating these foods altogether, but you should eat about the same amount every day.
 - Vitamin K is found in fatty foods and vegetables. Margarine, olive oil, mayonnaise, and soybean and canola oils are high in vitamin K.
 - Some vegetables high in vitamin K include asparagus, broccoli, cabbage, lettuce, turnip greens, spinach, and watercress.
- Talk to your doctor if you are thinking about becoming pregnant. Your anticoagulant medicine can affect the development of an unborn child and cause bleeding.
- Even after you stop taking your anticoagulant medicine, it may take several days before your blood will clot normally. Ask your doctor how long you need to be cautious.

Notes: _____

