

# Do you want to know?

## Anticoagulant Therapy

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sheet 1/2

### What is it?

“Anti” means against. “Coagulation” means blood clotting. Anticoagulants are used to prevent clots from forming or growing larger. There are different types of anticoagulant medications, each has a different action.

### What do you need to know?

#### Medication

- Take the right dose of the medication as ordered by your physician, since too much of the drug can cause bleeding and too little can cause clotting. For this reason, you must have blood tests done periodically.
- Take the anticoagulant at the same time everyday. If you are supposed to take it on alternate days, mark your calendar.
- Do not stop taking it unless your physician tells you to.
- Take any missed dose as soon as you remember. If it is almost the time for your next dose, skip the missed dose and continue your regular dosing schedule. If you miss two doses, call your physician.
- Never take a double dose to make up for the missed one.
- Keep anticoagulants at room temperature.
- Keep the container closed tight and out of the reach of children.

#### Interaction with Other Medications



- Do not take any supplements that contain vitamin K. If you take multivitamins or other supplements, check with your physician to ensure they are safe.
- Check with your physician or pharmacist before taking over-the-counter drugs to be sure they do not contain aspirin or other substances that may affect blood clotting.
- Take other prescription medications only as prescribed by your physician.

#### Diet



- Avoid eating foods rich in vitamin K since vitamin K increases the risk of blood clots and affects the treatment with anticoagulants. Foods rich in vitamin K include green leafy vegetables (spinach, lettuce, cabbage, parsley, broccoli), cereals (peas and beans), soybean oils and pickles.
- Maintain your usual diet as prior to starting anticoagulant therapy.
- If a change in the diet is to be made (for example, starting on a weight reducing one), consult your dietitian.

#### Activities



Avoid tough sports to prevent injury and bleeding.

#### Considerations



- While you are taking anticoagulant medications, your blood will clot more slowly if you are injured. Therefore, you should take precautions against even minor cuts and bruises. The following safety measures will help you prevent problems:
- Use a soft toothbrush.
- Avoid putting toothpicks or other sharp objects in your mouth.
- Protect your feet from injury. Do not walk barefoot, and do not trim corns or calluses yourself. See a podiatrist if necessary.
- Avoid using cutting tools or other sharp objects that could result in injury. If you injure yourself, keep pressure on the injury for 10 minutes. If the bleeding does not stop, call your physician immediately.
- Protect yourself from falling. Put a nonslippery mat in your bathtub or shower. Wear low-heeled shoes with non slip soles.
- Inform all physicians (for example, dentist, gynecologist) that you are taking anticoagulant medications.

The content of this educational leaflet is of general information. Ask your physician or health care provider if this content applies to you.

Prepared by the Nursing Services in coordination with other health care disciplines.

