



## Anticoagulation Information

### What is a blood clot?

When blood changes from liquid form to solid or semi-solid form, a blood clot is formed. When a clot occurs in deep veins, it can block the normal flow of blood and cause swelling, pain or even organ damage.

The most common places for blood clots to form are in the legs (*deep vein thrombosis or DVT*) or lungs (*pulmonary embolism or PE*).

Find out more at:  
[www.ThrombosisBC.ca](http://www.ThrombosisBC.ca)

### What are anticoagulants?

These are drugs that prevent the blood from clotting quickly. This allows your body to break down the clots you have and prevents clots from forming. That is why you are more likely to bleed while on anticoagulants.

Anticoagulants come in 2 common forms: pills taken by mouth and injections given under the skin.

### Taking Your Anticoagulant

- It is important that you take your anticoagulants at the same time each day.
- If you miss a dose of anticoagulants, do not take a double dose the next day, but carry on as normal and let the clinic or your doctor know next time.
- **Do not take anticoagulant pills if you are or think you are pregnant.**

### Side Effects of Anticoagulants

Side effects are very uncommon. The major concern is bleeding. Other important side effects to report are rash around the site of injections and worsening of blood clot symptoms. Report these problems urgently to your doctor.

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### What are the symptoms of blood clots?

- Pressure or sharp pain in the chest
- Unexplained shortness of breath
- Swelling or pain in the affected leg or arm
- Redness or warmth in the affected leg or arm
- Sensation that your heart is racing or pounding



## Aspirin and Ibuprofen

- **Do not** take aspirin, ibuprofen or other anti-inflammatory tablets (e.g., Advil®) unless instructed by a doctor.
- Acetaminophen (Tylenol®) is safe if you need to take something for a headache or minor pain.
- If you need something stronger than Tylenol®, you should see your family doctor.

## Other Medications

- It is very important to tell the Thrombosis Clinic nurse or doctor looking after your anticoagulants if you start a new medication or stop taking a medication.
- A change in dose of some medications can have an effect on the action of anticoagulants.
- Medication that you can buy over the counter at the pharmacy or naturopathic products can interfere with anticoagulants. You should discuss this with the pharmacist.

- Exercise regularly (*take a brisk walk every day*)
- Maintain a healthy body weight
- Avoid sitting or lying in bed for long periods of time
- Sit with both legs on the floor (*uncrossed*)
- Maintain balance between activity and rest
- Keep a healthy, regular and stable diet
- Stay hydrated - drink plenty of water everyday

**How can I lower my risk of having more clots?**

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### ! IMPORTANT THINGS TO KNOW !



#### When you are taking anticoagulants, you should avoid:

- Aspirin (*unless instructed by a doctor*)
- Ibuprofen and other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAIDS)
- Intramuscular injections
- Contact sports or activities that are prone to serious injury
- Binge or excessive drinking (*more than 2 drinks a day*)
- Smoking



#### Contact the Thrombosis Clinic or doctor looking after your anticoagulants if:

- You experience any abnormal bleeding or large bruises
- You are booked to have surgery
- You are having any procedure that can cause bleeding
- You are booked to have dental work other than cleaning
- You have acute illness with diarrhea or vomiting
- There is any change in your medications



#### Call your doctor urgently or go to an emergency room if you:

- Have bright red blood in your stool, urine or vomit
- Have black, tarry, very foul smelling stools
- Have sudden onset of a new, severe headache, especially if you are nauseated or drowsy
- Injured your head (*even if minor*) or have had a bad fall
- Swelling and severe pain in a joint
- Have unexplained shortness of breath
- Have worsening pain and swelling in legs or arms
- Have new or severe chest pain
- Feel your heart is racing, especially if you are dizzy

