

## Safe Use of Anticoagulants

### WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

#### What do I need to know about anticoagulants?

Anticoagulants are medicines used to treat or prevent blood clots by thinning your blood. These medicines can be used to treat conditions such as pulmonary embolism or venous thrombosis. The medicines may be used to prevent deep vein thrombosis (DVT) or blood clots after surgery or long-term bedrest.

**Example:** Heparin, Warfarin, Rivaroxaban, Dabigatran, Apixaban, Edoxaban etc.

#### How to take anticoagulants safely?

- **Always** take your medicine exactly as prescribed by doctor. Take medicine at the same time every day. This will help keep a steady level of medicine in body.
- **Take 1 dose of medicine at a time.** If patient forget to take a dose, **do not** take 2 doses. Too much anticoagulant in body may increase risk of bleeding and change medicine levels in blood.
- **Do not stop taking medicine.**
- **Do not take aspirin or products containing aspirin unless prescribed by doctor.** Many over-the-counter medicines contain aspirin. Aspirin may increase risk of bleeding.
- **Do not start or stop taking any other medicines (prescribed or over the counter) or supplements.** Ask doctor before changing any medicine or supplement. Certain medicines and supplements can cause excessive bleeding or cause anticoagulant to not work properly.

**What are the risks of taking anticoagulants?** Too much anticoagulant medicine may be life-threatening. Patient may have excessive bleeding or kidney or liver damage. If patient skip doses or do not take medicine, patient increase risk for blood clots. Blood clots can cause heart attacks, strokes, and other health conditions.

**What safety measures do I need to follow?** Tell all of your healthcare providers that you are taking anticoagulants. Keep a current list of medicines and their dosages with patient at all times.

- Patient may need regular blood tests so doctor can decide how much medicine he need. The dose may need to be changed because of patients test results
- Avoid activities that can cause bruising or bleeding.
- If you take warfarin, some foods can change how your blood clots. Do not make major changes to the foods you eat while you are taking warfarin. Warfarin works best when you eat about the same amount of vitamin K every day. Vitamin K is found

in green leafy vegetables, broccoli, grapes, and other foods. Ask for more information about what to eat when you take warfarin.

- Avoid drinking alcohol while taking anticoagulants. Alcohol can increase your risk of bleeding.

**When patient should contact Doctor / Pharmacist?**

- If he forget to take medicine or he take too much.
- If he has nausea or vomiting.
- If bleed when he brush teeth or blow nose.
- If urine or bowel movements are dark or have blood in them.
- If she became pregnant.

**Reference:** Micromedex's Care Notes System Online 2.0