

BLOOD THINNER: WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

Q: What is a blood thinner and why do I need it?

Blood thinner is a type of medicine that helps your blood not clot as fast. Sometimes it is prescribed to prevent serious blood clots from forming in your body, which can cause a stroke or other life-threatening events.

Q: How long do I have to be on blood thinners?

It depends on why you take the blood thinner and what other health problems you have. Some people take a blood thinner for only a few months, but many people take it for the rest of their life.



Q: How should I take the blood thinner?

Always follow your doctor's or nurse's instructions and take the pills exactly as prescribed.

- Go to the pill line every day to get your pill. A blood thinner is rarely given as a "carry med."
- Take your blood thinner at about the same time every day.
- Never take extra pills or skip a day. If you forget your pills one day, write it down and tell a doctor or nurse.
- Never stop taking your blood thinner unless your doctor tells you to stop. If you have any trouble with taking blood thinners or getting refills, send an Urgent CDC 7362 request to the triage nurse.

Q: What tests will I need if I take a blood thinner?

It depends on the type of blood thinner. A simple blood test called "INR" needs to be done regularly when taking warfarin. Your doctor will adjust your dose to get to a certain "INR." When you first start warfarin, you may need your blood checked often. Once your dose is adjusted, you only need blood tests about once a month.

Q: What do I need to know about using other medication when I am taking warfarin?

- When warfarin is taken with other medicines, it can change the way other medicines work, and other medicines can change the way certain blood thinners work and your blood can get thinner than needed.
- Tell your doctor or nurse if you are taking other medications, including over-the-counter medicines. Some common medications also raise the risk of bleeding like aspirin, ibuprofen, naproxen, or Motrin[®]-like medications (Naprosyn[®], Advil[®], Aleve[®]). Some "cough and cold medicines," herbal medications, and Pepto-Bismol may have aspirin.

Q: What are the side effects of blood thinners?

Side effects with blood thinners are uncommon but can include bleeding or bruising. A little bleeding that stops after a few minutes is okay, such as bleeding gums when brushing your teeth or a small nosebleed.

Tell your doctor or nurse right away if you have more serious bleeding, such as:

- Red, dark, coffee or cola-colored urine
- Stools that are black, bloody, or look like tar
- Bad nosebleeds, bleeding gums, or coughing up blood
- Throwing up coffee-colored or bright red vomit
- New bruises that come for no reason
- A cut that will not stop bleeding within 10 minutes
- Stomach, back or side pain that won't go away
- New or bad headache, problems with vision or speech, numbness or weakness, or confusion
- Too much menstrual bleeding

Q: What else should I know?

- Because of the risk of bleeding, don't do sports or other activities that could cause you to get hurt.
- Do not drink alcohol (Pruno), which can cause serious side effects with warfarin.
- **Let your provider know if you are fasting or doing a hunger strike, this can effect your medication level.**
- **Do not change your diet too much if you are taking warfarin.** Green vegetables like spinach, lettuce, broccoli, cabbage and frozen peas have a lot of vitamin K and change the way warfarin works. Try to keep the amount of vitamin K foods you eat the same every day.
- Know your dose and the color of your pills. The color of warfarin/Coumadin[®]/Jantoven[®] pills tells you how strong the pill is. CDCR uses:

