



How to Prevent Bleeding While Taking Blood Thinners

It is possible to help protect yourself from bleeding while you are taking blood thinners. Common blood thinners, also referred to as anticoagulants, include: warfarin, Coumadin®, Jantoven®, heparin, Lovenox® and enoxaparin.

Do I need to follow these precautions?

Some people may be on such a small dose of blood thinners that these precautions are not needed, but in general, anyone on a blood thinner should be aware of preventive measures and warning signs.

General tips when on a blood thinner:

- Plan a safe environment at home; arrange furniture to reduce risk of falls
- Get plenty of rest
- Ask for help with walking if you are not steady on your feet
- Do not take aspirin or any other drugs containing aspirin unless directed by your physician. Ask your pharmacist for information if you are not sure.
- Avoid activities where you could get hurt (i.e., contact sports, skiing, etc.)
- Do not use vitamin preparations containing vitamin K or large amounts of vitamin A, E or C without checking with your doctor/nurse first
- Avoid using dietary supplements such as Ensure®, BOOST® or Resource® until you have checked with your doctor, nurse or dietitian. Some of these contain vitamin K.
- Do not increase the amount of food in your diet that is high in vitamin K – such as green leafy vegetables, soy products or canola oil
- Do not take any drugs, herbal or dietary supplements unless you check with your doctor or nurse, as some of these have blood thinning properties. Many drugs and herbal remedies can change the way blood thinners work, which can be dangerous for you.

If you have any of the following symptoms, report it to your doctor or nurse right away:

- Bleeding from cuts, or a nosebleed that doesn't stop
- Unusual heavy bleeding from gums when brushing teeth
- Increased menstrual flow or vaginal bleeding
- Urine that looks dark brown or red
- Stool that looks black or tarry
- Bruising for unknown reasons
- Unusual pain, swelling or discomfort
- Severe headache

How to protect:

Your stomach and intestines:

- If nauseated, take measures to prevent vomiting
- If you do vomit and it looks like coffee grounds or you can see blood in it, call your doctor right away
- Keep fluid intake consistent and eat a healthy diet to avoid constipation
- Exercise to avoid constipation
- Avoid injuring delicate rectal tissue: avoid enemas, suppositories or harsh laxatives
- Ask your doctor for a stool softener or laxative if necessary
- Do not use a rectal thermometer
- Report constipation, dark tarry stools or blood in your stool to your doctor or nurse

How to protect: *(continued)*

Your mouth:

- Use a soft toothbrush
- Do not have dental work done without making the dentist aware you are on a blood thinner
- Do not wear ill-fitting dentures or retainers. Remove these items and give your mouth a rest at least eight hours a day.
- Check your mouth every day for bleeding. Call your doctor or nurse if you have unusual or heavy bleeding from the gums.

Your breathing passages:

- Add moisture to dry air if necessary, especially in the winter
- Do not blow your nose forcefully
- If you have a nosebleed after you sneeze, apply pressure and ice to your nose and the back of the neck. If the bleeding continues for longer than 10 minutes, call your doctor. Sit up to avoid getting blood into your lungs.
- Call your doctor if you cough up any blood

Your skin:

- Check your skin every day for new cuts, bruises or other injuries
- Put ice on new bruises or injuries
- Put pressure on any cuts for three to five minutes. If the bleeding does not stop, call your doctor.
- Use an emery board for nail care
- Avoid using sharp scissors, needles or other tools that could cause accidental injury
- Do not go barefoot
- Do not engage in activities where you could fall and get bumps and cuts
- Do not get an injection (shot) or a medical procedure that uses a needle until you have talked with your doctor

Talk to your doctor if you have questions.