

Anticoagulant and Antiplatelet Medicines

What are anticoagulants and antiplatelets used for?

Anticoagulants and antiplatelets are medicines that help treat or prevent blood clots and can help prevent serious medical problems, like heart attack or stroke.

Normally, blood clotting keeps the body from losing too much blood from wounds. However, blood clots in your blood vessels can cause problems if they block the flow of blood, oxygen, and nutrition to a part of your body. Some clots may form in the heart or the brain. Others may form somewhere else, like the leg, and then travel to another part of the body, like a lung.

You may be at higher risk for blood clots if you:

- Have had a heart attack or stroke
- Have an artificial heart valve
- Have a certain kind of irregular heartbeat
- Have a blood problem that makes your blood clot too easily
- Are on bed rest for a long time, like after an injury
- Have had certain types of surgery

These medicines may be given into a vein (IV), as a shot just under the skin, or as a tablet you take by mouth. The right amount and type of anticoagulant or antiplatelet can prevent many problems.

How do they work?

Anticoagulants, also called blood thinners, increase the time it takes blood to clot. This makes it harder for blood clots to form in your blood vessels. These medicines can also keep clots you already have from getting bigger.

Antiplatelet medicines keep blood cells called platelets from sticking together. This lowers the chance that blood clots will form.

What else do I need to know about this medicine?

- This medicine may cause you to bleed more easily or longer. Talk to your healthcare provider about the precautions that you should take while taking this medicine.
- Follow the directions that come with your medicine, including information about food or alcohol. Make sure you know how and when to take your medicine. Do not take more or less than you are supposed to take.
- Many medicines have side effects. A side effect is a symptom or problem that is caused by the medicine. Ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist what side effects the medicine may cause and what you should do if you have side effects.
- Try to get all of your prescriptions filled at the same place. Your pharmacist can help make sure that all of your medicines are safe to take together.

- Keep a list of your medicines with you. List all of the prescription medicines, nonprescription medicines, supplements, natural remedies, and vitamins that you take. Tell all healthcare providers who treat you about all of the products you are taking.
- You may need to carry a form of identification stating that you take this medicine, such as a medical alert bracelet or ID card. Talk with your healthcare provider about this.

If you have any questions, ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist for more information. Be sure to keep all appointments for provider visits or tests.

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