

# Anticoagulant Health Self-Management Plan

- Follow your health care provider's directions.
- Do not stop taking medicines without first checking with your health care provider.
- Call your health care provider before restarting medicines.
- Do not skip or double up on your medicines.
- Follow your health care provider's dietary recommendations.
- Check with your health care provider before drinking alcohol.
- Tell your health care provider if you smoke tobacco or marijuana.
- Make sure your medicines have not expired—check dates!
- Keep a medication list and bring to your appointments.
- Tell your health care provider and pharmacist about ALL medicines you are taking, including over-the-counter vitamins and herbal remedies.
- Tell all your health care providers and dentists that you are taking anticoagulants.

## Green Flags—All Clear

## What this means ...



### If you have:

- INR within range recommended by your health care provider.
- Good work!
- Your symptoms are under control.

## Keep up the great work!

## Yellow Flags—Caution



### If you have:

- Add, change, or stop any medicine, esp. if you:
  - Take Coumadin (warfarin)
  - Take Advil (ibuprofen) or other over-the-counter medicines with your anticoagulant medicine
  - Take medicines that can change the effectiveness of anticoagulants, such as but not limited to antibiotics, Vitamin K, and thyroid medicines
- Experience any of the following:
  - Diarrhea or vomiting one or more days
  - Fever or infection
  - Abdominal or stomach pain
  - Cramping that does not go away
  - Loss of appetite or unintentional weight loss
  - Jaundice (yellow eyes or skin)
  - Difficulty with routine exercise
  - Bleeding from gums or nose
  - Red or dark-brown urine
  - Severe headache
  - Burning, crawling, itching, numbness, prickling, “pins and needles” or tingling

(Continued from left column)

- Chest pain or discomfort
- Confusion
- Difficulty breathing or swallowing.
- Dizziness, faintness, or lightheadedness
- Unusual tiredness or weakness
- Skin sores or blisters
- Frequent bruising without a known cause

## What this means ...

- You may need follow-up by your health care provider or at an anticoagulation clinic.
- The anticoagulant may be causing side effects.
- Your anticoagulant dose may need to be adjusted.

### Notify your health care provider if symptoms do not improve.

Name:

Number:

If you notice a Yellow Flag, work closely with your health care team.

## Red Flags—Stop and Think

## What this means ...



### If you have:

- Rectal bleeding or red blood in your stool
- Black or tarry stools
- Arm, back, or jaw pain
- Coughed up blood that looks like coffee grounds
- Gum or nose bleeding that does not stop < 15 minutes
- Blue or purple toes
- Change in consciousness
- Chest tightness or heaviness increase that does not stop
- Fast or irregular heartbeat
- Trouble breathing with exertion
- Severe abdominal pain or stomach pain
- A fall or injury, especially to the head
- “Thunderclap” headache (very severe, quick onset)

- You could have internal bleeding and need to be seen by a health care provider as soon as possible.

### Notify your health care provider's office.

Name:

Number:

Follow these instructions: **CALL 9-1-1**

If you notice a Red Flag, CALL 9-1-1. Emergency!

# Anticoagulant Health Fast Facts

- An anticoagulant is a substance that prevents coagulation (clotting) of blood. This reduces blood clotting in an artery, a vein, or the heart.
- A clot can block the blood flow to your heart muscle and cause a heart attack or block blood flow to your brain, causing a stroke. A clot can also block the blood flow in your lungs (pulmonary embolism) or in your legs (deep vein thrombosis).
- Anticoagulants are prescribed by your health care provider for various reasons. Sometimes it is to prevent blood clots from forming, lower your chance of a blood clot forming, or to give your body time to dissolve a clot on its own.
- Though sometimes referred to as a “blood thinner”, they do not actually thin the blood. The medication reduces the ability of the blood to form clots.
- Some common anticoagulant medicines include Warfarin (also known as Coumadin) and are taken by mouth. Heparin and enoxaparin (or Hep-Lock or Hep Flush) are injectable medicines.
- Some anticoagulants like Warfarin require close monitoring and frequent visits with your doctor or pharmacist. Your healthcare provider will order a blood test called INR that stands for “International Normalized Ratio”. It measures how long it takes your blood to clot and your healthcare provider will decide what INR numbers are best for you.
- Several medicines can interact with anticoagulants. Some increase and some decrease the effect of the anticoagulant.
- Over the counter pain medicines can have an additional risk of bleeding when used in combination with anticoagulants. These include, but are not limited to, Aspirin, Advil or Motrin (Ibuprofen), and Aleve (Naproxen).
- Some medicines that can make anticoagulants less effective include, but are not limited to, Vitamin K and Thyroid medications.
- Some foods are high in vitamin K, including leafy green vegetables, certain beans and oils, beef liver, broccoli, brussels sprouts, cabbage, cheese, collard greens, green tea, kale, lentils, lettuce, spinach, soybean oil, and turnip greens.
- Antibiotics can significantly change your INR, sometimes very quickly.
- Vitamins and supplements can easily interact with your medicines and, if taken together, may be harmful to your health. Vitamins and supplements may also be harmful for certain health conditions or medical procedures.

## What can you do?

- Have your blood checked (INR) as per health care provider directions.
- Take medicines only as prescribed. Do not take more or less medicine without talking with your health care provider.
- Before you start taking any antibiotics, even if just for a few days, make sure you check with your healthcare provider to make sure the antibiotic is safe to take with your anticoagulant medicine.
- Make sure you keep your vitamin K intake consistent. Avoid sudden changes in the intake of foods and vitamins containing vitamin K.
- Consult your healthcare provider before taking vitamins or supplements.
- Talk with your healthcare provider or dentist before having any surgery to see if you need to change your anticoagulant medicine before or after the procedure.

## Aging and Disability Services

Aging and Disability Services (ADS)—the Area Agency on Aging for King County—plans, coordinates, and advocates for comprehensive services for older adults, family caregivers, and people with disabilities throughout Seattle and King County. For information about services or interpretation assistance, call 844-348-5464 or e-mail [info@communitylivingconnections.org](mailto:info@communitylivingconnections.org).



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