

Bassett Road Surgery

Oral Anticoagulants

Introduction:

This leaflet has been given to you because you are taking a medicine known as an anticoagulant. You should have already received advice about this medication when you either left hospital or first visited the anticoagulation clinic but any of our nurses or secretaries will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Information in this leaflet:

This leaflet provides you with important information about your treatment and contact information for you to obtain further advice. Please retain it for easy reference.

Anticoagulant Alert Card:

You will have received one of these which you need to fill in and carry with you at all times.

Record Card:

This indicates your latest blood test result, dosage of anticoagulant and the date of your next blood test. You should take this with you to any anticoagulant clinic appointments so it can be kept up to date.

What is an anticoagulant?

This medicine prevents harmful blood clots from forming in your blood vessels by making your blood take longer to clot. Warfarin is the most commonly used anticoagulant in this country.

How should I take my anticoagulant?

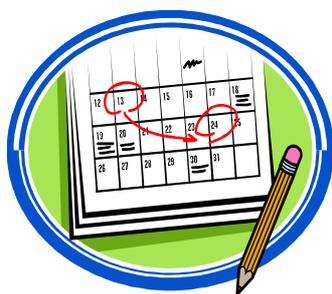
Take your anticoagulant once a day, at tea-time, preferably on an empty stomach and washed down with a full glass of water.

If you miss a dose, or take the wrong dose by mistake, make a note in your record card. Take your normal dose the next day. If the dose you took in error greatly exceeded your normal dose, please contact the anticoagulant clinic.

You may be given a number of different strength tablets to make up your dose and it is important that you become familiar with the different strengths and colours of the tablets that you need to take.

In the UK, the colours of warfarin tablets are:

White tablet	-	0.5mg (500mcg)
Brown tablet	-	1mg
Blue tablet	-	3mg
Pink tablet	-	5mg



If you are worried about the dose you are taking, please talk to your GP, one of our nurses or secretaries.

Do not confuse the dose in mg with the number of tablets you take.



Monitoring your anticoagulant treatment:

You must have a regular blood test called an INR test. (INR stands for Inter-national Normalised Ratio.)

This is a standard test which measures how long your blood takes to clot. Normally, blood that is not anticoagulated has an INR of approximately 1.0. The dose of anticoagulant that you need to take will depend on your INR test result. If your result is out of the range appropriate for your condition, your dose of anticoagulant will be increased or decreased accordingly. The anticoagulant dose required to achieve the target INR varies for each person.

The Anticoagulation Service in your area:

One of our anticoagulant-trained nurses, secretaries or your GP will arrange your blood tests for you.

It is important that you tell your anticoagulant clinic about any medicines that you have started or discontinued.

Repeat Prescriptions:

Make sure that you do not run out of tablets and always have at least a week's supply.

Serious side-effects:

The most serious side effect of anticoagulants is bleeding. If you experience any of the following, seek medical attention as you may need an urgent INR test:

- prolonged nosebleeds (more than 10 minutes);
- blood in vomit
- blood in sputum;
- passing blood in your urine or faeces;
- passing black faeces;
- severe or spontaneous bruising;
- unusual headaches;
- for women, heavy or increased bleeding during your period or any other vaginal bleeding.

If you cut yourself, apply firm pressure to the site for at least 5 minutes using a clean, dry dressing.

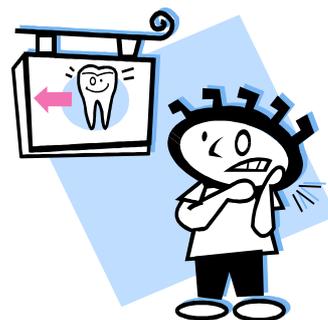
Seek immediate medical attention if you:

- are involved in major trauma;
- suffer a significant blow to the head;
- are unable to stop bleeding;

Going to the dentist:

You can still go to the dentist as usual. In the majority of cases, your dental treatment can go ahead as normal without your anticoagulant being stopped or the dose being adjusted.

However, your dentist will need to see a recent INR test result to ensure that it is safe to provide treatment. Your dentist will be able to provide you with a leaflet which explains this and gives you some additional advice. You should contact your dentist before your appointment in case they need you to have an extra blood test.



Things that can affect the control of anticoagulation:

Other medicines:

Many medications can interact with anticoagulants.

If, during your course of anticoagulants, you are also starting or stopping another medication, the prescriber may advise that you should have a blood test within 5-7 days of starting the new medication. This is to make sure that your INR remains within the desired range. Please contact your anticoagulant clinic for further advice.

If you are planning to buy over the counter medicines, including alternative remedies, tell the pharmacist that you are taking an oral anticoagulant and show them your anticoagulant alert card. They can then advise you on medicines that are safe for you to take.

You should not take aspirin unless it has been specifically prescribed by your GP. It is also advisable to avoid other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs like diclofenac or ibuprofen. Please note that some of these can be bought over the counter in pharmacies with names such as Nurofen®. Paracetamol and codeine-based painkillers are acceptable, although be aware that some paracetamol 'plus' products contain aspirin.

Diet:



It is important to eat a well-balanced diet. Consult your doctor or practice nurse if you need to diet to lose weight. Any major changes in your diet may affect how your body responds to your anticoagulant medication.

Foods rich in vitamin K may affect your INR result. Such foods include green leafy vegetables, chick peas, liver, egg yolks, cereals containing wheat bran and oats, mature cheese, blue cheese, avocado and olive oil. These foods are important in your diet but eating them in large amounts may lower your INR result. Try to take the same amount of these foods on a regular basis.

If your diet changes greatly over a 7 day period, you should have an INR test.

Alcohol:

It is recommended that you do not exceed the national guidelines. These are up to 3 units a day for men and up to 2 units a day for women

One pint of beer is 2 units, one pub measure of a spirit is one unit and one pub measure of wine is one unit.



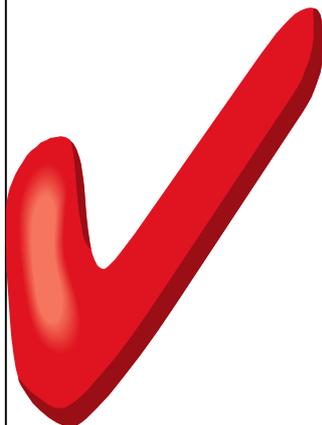
It is dangerous to 'binge drink' while taking anticoagulants.

Pregnancy:

Oral anticoagulants can affect the development of a baby in early pregnancy. Women who are on oral anticoagulants should discuss plans for future pregnancy with their doctor before trying to conceive, wherever possible. Women who think they have become pregnant while on warfarin should have a pregnancy test as soon as possible and, if this is positive, an urgent appointment with a doctor. It is safe to breast feed while taking anticoagulant medication.

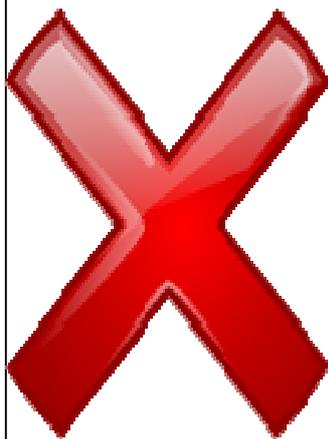
Summary of Do's and Don'ts

Do's:



- Carry your alert card with you at all times.
- Take your record card with you to all doctor and hospital appointments and to the pharmacist when buying over the counter medications.
- Keep your appointments for your blood to be checked. While taking anticoagulants, this must be checked regularly to assess the dose you need. If you cannot attend, ring the surgery so we can make you another appointment.
- Inform the doctor if you have any bruising and bleeding problems.
- Remind your doctor or dentist that you are taking an anticoagulant if any surgery or dental treatment is needed.
- Remember the name, strength and colour of your tablets.
- Take your tablets at the same time each day, usually tea-time.

Don'ts:



- Don't miss a dose of anticoagulant. If you do, make a note of the date and time and tell the nurse when you next have a blood test. If you miss more than one dose, ask your GP for advice.
- Don't take an extra dose if you are unsure if you have taken your tablets. If necessary, use a calendar and mark off each dose by a line through the date.
- Don't run out of tablets. Always ensure that you have at least a week's supply.
- Don't take aspirin or any preparation containing aspirin unless this is prescribed by a doctor who knows you are taking anticoagulants.
- Don't go on crash diets or start 'binge' eating.
- Don't take more than moderate amounts of alcohol.