

Safe Use of Non-Warfarin Blood Thinners

Blood thinner medicine can be a lifesaver.

Medicines like aspirin, warfarin, and other anticoagulants help prevent the kind of clots that can cause serious problems, like a stroke or heart attack.

But taking a blood thinner also raises your risk of bleeding.

Luckily, there are some simple ways to get the benefit of your medicine while keeping your risk low.

Now, the safety measures are a little different for people who take warfarin.

But if you take any other type of blood thinner including aspirin these five steps can help you avoid problems.

Number one: know the signs of bleeding.

They include blood in your urine or stool or menstrual periods that are longer or heavier than usual.

Call your doctor if you have any of these signs or if you apply pressure for several minutes to a cut or a nosebleed but you can't stop the bleeding.

Call 911 if you're coughing up or vomiting blood.

And call 911 if you have a sudden severe headache.

That may be a sign of bleeding in the brain.

Number two: Be safe with your blood thinner medicine.

Take it exactly as prescribed.

And try to take it about the same time every day.

If you miss a dose and you aren't sure what to do, call your doctor.

Don't just double your next dose.

And be sure you know how to store your medicine safely.

Number three Be careful with other medicines.

Pain relievers like aspirin or ibuprofen for example, Advil or Motrin can change the way a blood thinner works so don't take those medicines unless your doctor says it's okay.

And check with your doctor before you start or stop taking any prescription or over-the-counter medicine or natural health product.

To be safe, keep a list of all the medicines you take, and show it to every doctor and dentist you visit.

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Number four: Talk to your doctor about medical procedures.

If you need to have any type of surgery or medical test that could cause bleeding from a root canal to a colonoscopy check with your doctor as soon as you can.

You may need to stop taking your medicine before the procedure.

If you do, your doctor will tell you when to stop and when you can start taking it again.

And number five: Reduce your risk of injury.

A fall, bump, or cut could cause serious bleeding so stay active, but you might choose safer activities like walking and swimming and wear protective gear, like helmets, for sports.

Also, remove things in your home that could trip you, like throw rugs and clutter and put a nonslip mat in your tub or shower.

So that's five things you can do to be safe.

It may seem like a lot to keep in mind but your care provider can help if you have any questions.

A blood thinner may take a little extra work, but it's worth the effort because it could save your life.