

Care in the Hospital: Bleeding Prevention and Blood Thinners

If you're taking an anticoagulant or other blood thinner, you've probably been told about your bleeding risks.

You may have been prescribed blood thinners because they help prevent the kind of clots that could cause a stroke or block blood flow to your lungs.

Now, unless your doctor tells you differently, continue to take all of your medicines as prescribed.

And know that before going into the hospital, your doctor will tell you which of your medicines to keep taking or to stop.

So, while you're in the hospital, bleeding is a big concern for your care team.

That's why, while you're in their care, they'll be doing all they can to help prevent bleeding.

For example, your care team will help you avoid falls.

They'll also keep a close eye on all of your care, including treatment and medicines.

They may make changes to lower your risk for bleeding.

Your care team will watch for food or drug interactions.

The care team may help you avoid constipation by giving you stool softeners.

And, in addition to taking your vitals like your pulse and temperature, the care team will look over your body for signs of bleeding under your skin.

They may also look for blood in your spit, stools, or urine.

You are part of the care team too, so you'll be taught some ways to care for yourself.

Be sure to follow your care team's directions for staying safe, taking medicines, eating, and being active.

Use your call button to let your care team know if you have a nosebleed or if you see blood in your spit, stool, or urine.

Watch for blood soaking through a bandage.

Watch for bruising or small red spots on your skin.

And use your call button if you have new or worse pain or swelling.

Use the call button if you have chest pain, are short of breath, or cough up blood.

And let the care team know if you vomit or have belly pain.

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It's also very important to use the call button if you have signs of a stroke.

These signs can include a sudden, severe headache like you've never experienced before; sudden numbness, tingling, or weakness; or loss of movement in the face, arm, or leg.

Remember, there are other reasons you may bleed while you're in the hospital.

Bleeding may happen, for example, if you fall and hurt yourself or if you brush your teeth too hard.

To avoid falling, move slowly and ask for help when you need it.

And remember to brush and floss very gently so that you don't cause any bleeding in the gums.

Another way to avoid bleeding: Don't shave with a razor.

Electric shaving may be fine.

Now before you go home, you'll meet with your care team to go through your care plan.

This is a great time to ask questions.

Your plan will include information about checkups, healthy eating, specialist care, any ongoing tests you may need, and who to call if there's a problem.

It's important to go to any follow-up appointments for checkups or tests.

Your medicines, including blood thinners, may change too.

Be sure you understand what these medicines are and how to take them.

The care team will also review your list of medicines again for any drug-to-drug or food-to-drug interactions.

This may be a lot to think about while you're healing.

But knowing that your care team is trained and focused on helping you stay safe can help.

And if you have any questions or concerns, you can always talk to your care team.