

After a Stroke: Taking an Antiplatelet

After a stroke, your doctor may have asked you to take an antiplatelet to help prevent another stroke.

Now this medicine won't make you feel any different.

So it can be hard to understand why it's important to take it. It might help to learn how it works.

We all have stuff—like cholesterol and fats—that builds up in our arteries over time.

This "stuff" is called plaque. But sometimes the plaque can break open.

That's when these little things in your blood called platelets arrive on the scene to try to help.

Their job is to stop bleeding—like if you were to get a cut on your finger.

The platelets grab onto the plaque.

And they start sticking together to make a clot, just like with the cut on your finger.

But if that clot forms somewhere in your brain, that part of the brain won't get enough blood and oxygen.

Or if the clot forms somewhere else in your body and travels to your brain, it can get stuck and, again, block that blood flow.

Either way, when blood flow is blocked, brain cells can die.

And that's how a stroke happens. All of this may sound scary.

But taking an antiplatelet medicine as your doctor prescribed can help prevent another stroke.

Now here's how an antiplatelet may help.

It makes your platelets slippery, so when they come to a tear in the plaque, it's much harder for them to stick together to build a clot.

And although an antiplatelet can help prevent clots and another stroke, taking it has some risks.

Your blood might not clot very well when you need it to, like when you have a bloody nose, so you may bleed easily. And sometimes, the bleeding can be inside your body.

The risk of this happening is low, but it is serious.

So here are some things to watch for.

or suitability of this video for medical decision making. For all health related issues please contact your healthcare provider.



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Call your doctor if you have blood in your urine or stool, or if you cough up or vomit blood.

And call if you have a nosebleed or a cut that keeps bleeding after you've put pressure on it for several minutes.

And you'll need to call if you have a sudden, severe headache that is different from any headache you've ever had.

Also, tell all of your doctors, your pharmacist, and your dentist that you're taking antiplatelet medicines.

This will help them make sure all of your other medicines are safe to take with antiplatelets.

They also need to know in case you have a procedure that causes bleeding.

Taking an antiplatelet to prevent another stroke might make you worry.

It can help to know how to take this medicine safely and what problems to watch for.

And remember, by taking an antiplatelet, you're doing something very important for your health.