

TESTfacts

An Educational Health Series From National Jewish Health®



Anticoagulation Clinic

What are anticoagulant medicines?

Anticoagulant medicines are a group of medicines that inhibit blood clotting, helping to prevent blood clots. Blood clots can cause heart attacks and strokes. Anticoagulant medicines can be used with a number of diseases when there is an increased risk of blood clots. Common anticoagulant medicines include:

- Coumadin®, Jantoven® (warfarin)
- Lovenox® (enoxaparin)
- Hep-Lock U/P®, Hep-Lock®, HepFlush-10® (heparin)

What is the Anticoagulation Clinic?

Your doctor has suggested that you be followed in the Anticoagulation Clinic at National Jewish Health since you are taking an anticoagulant medicine. The amount of medicine in your blood should be monitored closely to assure you are getting enough medicine to prevent blood clots, yet not to much to cause bleeding. Regular visits to the Anticoagulation Clinic are important to monitor your blood levels closely. The Anticoagulation Team includes a doctor, nurse, pharmacist and lab members.

What is done in Anticoagulation Clinic?

The nurse in the Anticoagulation Clinic will meet with you each visit. The nurse will talk with you about how to care for yourself when you are taking anticoagulant medicine. Important points include:

- Special techniques for taking the medicine
- Potential diet and medicine interactions
- Signs and symptoms of increased bleeding
- Actions to take with increased bleeding

The nurse will draw blood with a fingerstick to test your INR (International Normalized Ratio) level during the visit. The INR is a standard measure of the clotting process time.

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In most situations, the INR level should fall in a target range. If the INR is too low there is increased risk of blood clot formation. If the INR is too high there is increased risk of bleeding. The Anticoagulation Team will also track your INR results over multiple visits to follow trends in your results. The Anticoagulation Team will look at all this information to determine the dose of medicine you will go home on.

How often will you visit the Anticoagulation Clinic?

You will be seen in Anticoagulation clinic at least every 3 – 4 weeks. You may be seen more frequently.

What can you do if you get a cut or bruise?

If you get a cut that is bleeding apply pressure to the cut until the bleeding stops. You may want to have gauze pads available when you apply pressure. This will help the blood clot. If the bleeding does not stop, or the cut is large, get medical help right away. This may include going to the emergency room or calling 911.

If you have a new bruise, apply a cold pack to the bruise. You may want to have cold packs available also.

When do you call your health care provider?

The main side effect seen with anticoagulant medicine is bleeding. Bleeding or hemorrhage (bleeding within the body) can occur in any part of the body.

If you notice these signs and symptoms call your health care provider right away:

- Dizziness, headache or trouble thinking clearly
- Nosebleeds
- Coughing up blood
- Nausea or vomiting blood or coffee ground looking material
- Swelling, painful or hot joints
- Fever
- Increased bruising or bleeding
- Blood in the urine
- Bloody or black, tarry stools
- Severe menstrual bleeding
- Feeling very tired or weak
- Nausea and vomiting for more than 24 hours
- Bleeding from the gums after brushing teeth

Also call if you fall or have an accident, especially if you hit your head, even if you feel fine. If you have questions about how you are feeling or are concerned, please call. You can call the Anticoagulation Nurse at 303-398-1355.

In an emergency please call 911.

How do you schedule an appointment?

You can schedule an appointment in the Anticoagulation Clinic by calling 303-398-1355.

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