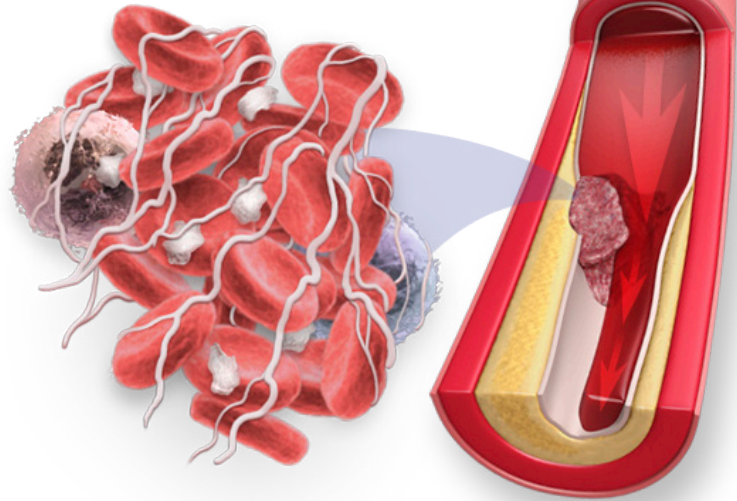




What are Anticoagulants and Antiplatelet Agents?

Anticoagulants and antiplatelets are medications that prevent blood clots from forming. They are prescribed to help prevent heart attacks and strokes caused by blood clots.

Blood clots are made up of red blood cells, platelets, fibrin, and white blood cells (shown below). Anticoagulants and antiplatelets keep these parts from sticking together and forming a clot.



What should I know about anticoagulants?

Anticoagulants (sometimes called “blood thinners”) are medications that delay blood clotting. Examples are heparin, warfarin, dabigatran, apixaban, rivoraxaban and edoxaban. Blood thinners make it harder for blood clots to form in your heart, veins and arteries. They also can keep existing clots from growing larger. It’s important to follow these tips while on blood thinners:

- Take your medications as prescribed.
- Never take aspirin with blood thinners unless you are told to.
- Make sure all your health care professionals know you’re taking blood thinners.
- Always talk to your health care team before taking any new medications or supplements. This includes aspirin, vitamins, cold medicine, pain medicine, sleeping pills or antibiotics. These can strengthen or weaken how blood thinners work.
- If you take warfarin, have regular blood tests so your health care team can tell how the medication is working.
 - The test for people on warfarin is called a prothrombin time (PT) or International Normalized Ratio (INR) test.
- Talk to your health care professionals about your diet. Foods rich in vitamin K can reduce the effects of warfarin.

Vitamin K is in leafy green vegetables, fish, liver, lentils, soybeans and some vegetable oils.

- Tell your family that you take blood thinners.
- Always carry your emergency medical ID card.

Could anticoagulants cause problems?

If you follow your health care professional’s advice, there probably won’t be problems. But you must tell them right away if:

- You think you’re pregnant or you’re planning to get pregnant.
- Your urine turns pink, red or brown. This could be a sign of urinary tract bleeding.
- Your stools turn red, dark brown or black. This could be a sign of intestinal bleeding.
- You bleed more than usual when you have your period.
- Your gums bleed.
- You have a very bad headache or stomach pain that doesn’t go away.
- You get sick or feel weak, faint or dizzy.

(continued)



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- You often find bruises or blood blisters.
- You have an accident, such as a bump on the head, a cut that won't stop bleeding or a fall.

What should I know about antiplatelet agents?

Antiplatelets keep blood clots from forming by keeping blood platelets from sticking together.

Almost everyone with coronary artery disease, including those who have had a heart attack, stent or coronary artery bypass graft surgery (CABG), is treated with aspirin. Aspirin can help prevent an ischemic stroke. It can also help if you have had a transient ischemic attack (TIA) or if you have heart problems.

Many heart attack and stroke patients — and people seeking to avoid these events — may get dual antiplatelet therapy (DAPT). With DAPT, two types of antiplatelets, aspirin and a P2Y₁₂ inhibitor, are used to prevent blood clots.

P2Y₁₂ inhibitors are usually prescribed for months or years along with aspirin therapy. You may be prescribed one of these medications — clopidogrel, prasugrel or ticagrelor. Prasugrel should not be prescribed if you have had a stroke



or a TIA. You will be prescribed the best one for you based on your risk of blood clots and bleeding.

Do I need an emergency medical ID?

Yes, always keep it with you. It needs to include:

- The name of the medications you're taking.
- Your name, phone number and address.
- The name, address and phone number of your doctor.

HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

- 1 Call 1-800-AHA-USA1 (1-800-242-8721) or visit heart.org to learn more about heart disease and stroke.
- 2 Sign up for our monthly *Heart Insight* e-news for heart patients and their families at HeartInsight.org.
- 3 Connect with others sharing similar journeys with heart disease and stroke by joining our Support Network at heart.org/SupportNetwork.

Do you have questions for your doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write down questions for the next time you see your health care professional.

For example:

What kind of aspirin or other antiplatelet agent should I take?

What is the right dose for me?

MY QUESTIONS:

We have many other fact sheets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk of heart disease, manage your condition or care for a loved one. Visit heart.org/AnswersByHeart to learn more.