Anticoagulation, Generic

Anticoagulants are medications used to prevent clots from developing in your veins. If blood clots are untreated, they could travel to your lungs. This is called a pulmonary embolus. A blood clot in your lungs can be fatal (cause death). These medications are also known as blood thinners.

Caregivers often use blood thinners to prevent clots following surgery. They are also used along with aspirin when the heart is not getting enough blood.

Another blood thinner called coumadin (warfarin) is started two to three days after a rapid acting injectable blood thinner is started. The rapid acting blood thinners are usually continued until warfarin has begun to work. Your caregiver will judge this length of time by measuring a blood test known as the INR. An INR (International Normalization Ratio) of 2.0 to 3.0 is desirable. This means that your blood is at the necessary and best level to prevent clots.

RISKS & COMPLICATIONS OF THE PROCEDURE

- It is extremely important that you tell all of your caregivers that you are taking a blood thinner, especially if you are injured or plan to have any type of procedure or operation.
- Because anticoagulants thin your blood, complications can sometimes occur including spontaneous bleeding into the bowel, kidneys, and other areas of your body. Any bleeding should be reported right away to your caregiver.
- If you have received recent epidural/spinal anesthesia or a spinal tap receiving blood thinners, you are at risk of developing a blood clot in or around the spine. This condition could result in long-term or permanent paralysis.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

You will be instructed by your caregiver how to take anticoagulants.

- Changes in medicines, supplements, diet, and illness can affect your warfarin therapy. Be sure to inform your caregivers of any of these changes.
- While on warfarin, you will need to have your INR blood test done routinely as directed by your caregivers.
- If your caregiver has given you a follow-up appointment, it is very important to keep that appointment. Not keeping the appointment could result in a chronic or permanent injury, pain, and disability. If there is any problem keeping the appointment, you must call back to this facility for assistance

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You develop bleeding problems or large areas of bruising.
- You develop any rashes.
- You have any worsening of the condition you are being treated with the anticoagulants for.
- You develop chest pain, shortness of breath, or headache. **If the chest pain, shortness of breath, or headache is severe, call 911.**

MAKE SURE YOU:

- Understand these instructions.
- Will watch your condition.
- Will get help right away if you are not doing well or get worse.

Document Released: 12/18/2006 Document Re-Released: 01/09/2011
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