Coumadin® Coagulopathy

Warfarin (Coumadin®) is the most common oral blood thinner (*anticoagulant*) used today. It is used for many problems where thinning of the blood is needed to prevent blood clots. It usually takes 3 to 4 days of treatment with warfarin for the blood to be thinned. Too much warfarin in the blood can be dangerous and can cause bleeding from different parts of your body. There is a risk of warfarin overdose and bleeding if you get your medicine schedule confused. Similar problems can happen if a small child finds and takes the warfarin that was prescribed for a parent or guardian. There are also times when too much warfarin is taken intentionally in an attempt to commit suicide.

CAUSES

- It may be from intentional or accidental overdose.
- It can be the result of drug interactions or dietary intakes.

SYMPTOMS

Severe hemorrhage may occur from any tissue or organ. The amount of bleeding is related to the amount of anticoagulation drug, length of treatment, your illnesses and other medicines you are using that can affect clotting. Complications of the blood being too thin may include:

- Bleeding from the mucous membranes.
- Blood in the urine.
- Nosebleeds, bleeding gums and bruising.
- Bleeding in the brain or spinal cord.
- Bleeding into the bowel.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

If your blood tests today show that you are safe to return home:

- Do not resume taking your blood thinner until instructed to do so by your caregiver.
- You should see your caregiver within the next 2 to 3 days for follow-up care.
- Do not stop taking the medicine without your caregiver's approval. You may need to continue using blood thinners to prevent serious medical problems.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- Any of the problems that brought you in are getting worse.
- You develop increased bleeding from any place on your body.
- You develop a severe headache or have problems seeing.
- You have trouble moving your arms or legs.
- You begin passing bright red blood or clots in your urine.
- You develop dark or black stools.
- You become weak, lightheaded or short of breath and feel like passing out.
- You injure yourself and cannot stop the bleeding.

Document Released: 11/26/2007 Document Re-Released: 03/14/2011
ExitCare® Patient Information ©2011 ExitCare, LLC.