

# Life With Blood-Thinners

## Precautions to take while you are taking anti-coagulants

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### Introduction

"Blood-thinners" is a common term for anti-coagulant medications. Anti-coagulants are medications that thin the blood and reduce the amount of clotting factor that the body produces. Anti-coagulants are often prescribed for individuals who have had heart problems, who are at elevated risk of a stroke, or who have had issues with deep vein thrombosis (DVT). Different medications work in different ways, so it's important that you learn the names of the medications that are prescribed for you, and do the appropriate research

### General Precautions

There are several key precautions that all patients who are taking anti-coagulants should consider. Anti-coagulant medications thin the blood and increase the amount of blood loss that you may suffer from a minor cut. They can also dramatically increase the severity of bruising. The following steps are recommended to help reduce the likelihood of serious injury:

- Develop a fall prevention strategy for around your home. The risks associated with cuts or bruises from falls are magnified if you are taking anti-coagulants. The link below is to a *Fall Prevention Checklist for Seniors* from the CDC. You should review this checklist while doing a walk-through of your home and considering changes you can make to increase your safety. [http://www.cdc.gov/HomeandRecreationalSafety/pubs/English/booklet\\_Eng\\_desktop-a.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/HomeandRecreationalSafety/pubs/English/booklet_Eng_desktop-a.pdf)
- Wear safety gloves when using hand-tools. Safety gloves will help to prevent the formation of callouses that can tear and bleed, and prevent small cuts to your hands and wrists. You don't have to wear very large and heavy gloves, just a regular pair of gardening gloves from your local hardware store will help.
- Purchase a pair of cut resistant gloves to wear in the kitchen. These gloves are designed specifically for food preparation, and some are even dishwasher safe for easy cleanup.





- Purchase a Safety Can Opener: these devices cut cans differently than regular can openers, so they don't create a sharp edge around the lid.
- Never combine prescription medications with homeopathic medicine or home remedies. Combining a prescription anti-coagulant with home-remedies like aspirin therapy or Ginkgo extract can cause dizziness, muscle fatigue, bleeding of the nose and gums, and excessive blood loss from minor cuts.

## Information on Medications



MedlinePlus is an excellent source of information on the medications you are taking. Go to: <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/> and enter the name of the medication you are taking into the search-box at the top right of the page. Click on the red button and you will see a list of topics related to that medication.

Read through everything on your first page of results, there will probably be several articles that are of interest to you. The list of results at the right is from a search for the drug Warfarin. As you can see, MedlinePlus includes articles by private groups such as the American Heart Association, and topics range from general information about the drug, to recommendations for patients, and suggestions about issues that may be of concern to your doctor. MedlinePlus has information about all commonly prescribed FDA approved anti-coagulants that are currently in use.

1. [Warfarin](#)  
Warfarin is used to prevent blood clots from forming or growing larger in your blood and blood ... and people who have suffered a heart attack. Warfarin is also used to treat or prevent venous ...  
[www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/druginfo/meds/a682277.html](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/druginfo/meds/a682277.html) - Drugs and Supplements
2. [Important Information to Know When You Are Taking: Warfarin \(Coumadin\) and Vitamin K](#) (National Institutes of Health, Clinical Center) - PDF  
... Important information to know when you are taking: Warfarin (Coumadin) and Vitamin K. The food you eat ... between warfarin (Coumadin) and vitamin K. Why was warfarin (Coumadin) prescribed for you? Warfarin (Coumadin) is a ...  
[www.cc.nih.gov/.../drug\\_nutrient/coumadin1.pdf](http://www.cc.nih.gov/.../drug_nutrient/coumadin1.pdf) - External Health Links
3. [Patient's Guide to Taking Warfarin](#) (American Heart Association)  
... Names for Warfarin Country Foreign Brand Name for Warfarin Australia Warfarin, Marevan Canada Apo-Warfarin Indonesia Simarc- ...  
[www.heart.org/...e-to-Taking-Warfarin\\_UCM\\_444996\\_Article.jsp](http://www.heart.org/...e-to-Taking-Warfarin_UCM_444996_Article.jsp) - External Health Links
4. [Taking warfarin \(Coumadin\)](#)  
Warfarin is a medicine that makes your blood less likely to form clots. This may be important ... or other heart problems may need to take warfarin. When you are taking warfarin, you may be ...  
[www.nlm.nih.gov/.../ency/patientinstructions/000292.htm](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/.../ency/patientinstructions/000292.htm) - Medical Encyclopedia
5. [Taking warfarin \(Coumadin\) - what to ask your doctor](#)  
Warfarin (Coumadin) is a medicine that helps keep your blood from clotting. This may be important if ... or nurse to help you when you take warfarin.  
[www.nlm.nih.gov/.../ency/patientinstructions/000255.htm](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/.../ency/patientinstructions/000255.htm) - Medical Encyclopedia