

Anticoagulant Injections

What is an anticoagulant?

An **anticoagulant** is a medication that helps to prevent clots from forming in your blood. This type of medication is often taken as a pill, but it is sometimes given as an injection (shot).

Anticoagulant injections — such as heparin, enoxaparin (Lovenox), or fondaparinux (Arixtra) — might take the place of anticoagulant pills or be added to them.

Why do I need to have injections?

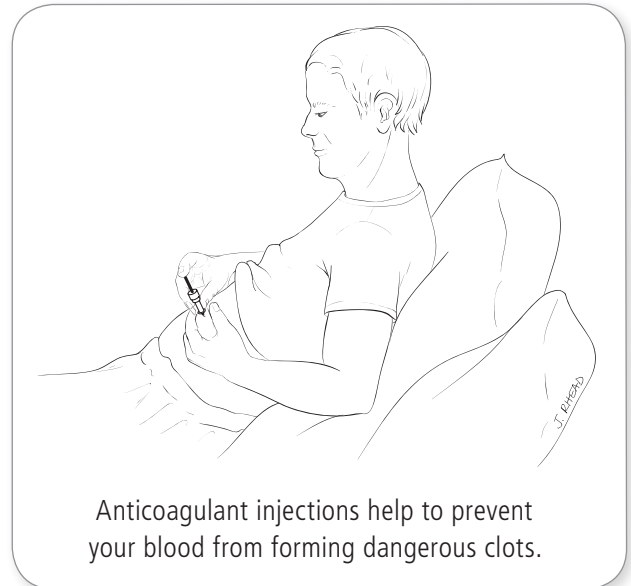
You may be prescribed anticoagulant injections:

- If you are at risk for blood clots because you are sick or injured and can't move around very much.
- If you already have a blood clot in a blood vessel or in your lung(s).
- If you have certain heart problems or a condition that puts you at risk for blood clots.
- If you have had certain surgeries.
- If you are on Coumadin (warfarin) and your INR blood test results are too low. (An INR test measures how well the Coumadin is working.)

Talk with your doctor before starting the injections

Before you begin anticoagulant injections, **tell your doctor if you:**

- Have bleeding problems, kidney disease, liver disease, ulcers, stomach problems, or intestine problems.
- Are currently pregnant or breastfeeding, or are trying to become pregnant.
- Have had a recent surgery.
- Have had a stroke.
- Have ever had heart valve problems or heart valve surgery.
- Are allergic to any medications.
- Are allergic to pork products, since some anticoagulant medications are made from pigs. (Note: If your faith has dietary laws against pork, talk to your religious leader.)



You should also **tell your doctor about any other medication you take**, including over-the-counter remedies, herbs, and supplements.

How to give yourself an injection

Anticoagulant injections are usually given using a prefilled syringe with a very small needle. Your healthcare provider will show you how to inject the medication, and it will need to be injected every day.

Getting ready for the injection

Here's how to get ready for the injection:

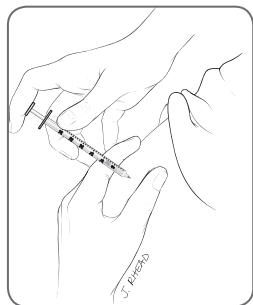
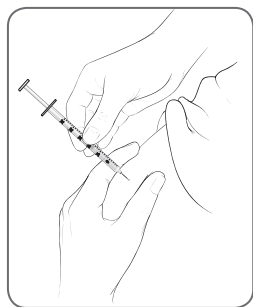
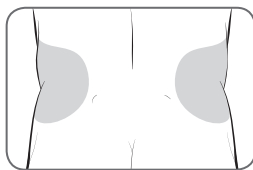
- 1 Wash your hands.
- 2 Remove the cap from the syringe. Check to see if the black tip on the syringe plunger is even with the line for the dose you should take. If the syringe contains more medication than you should have in a dose, you may have to not use all of the medication in the syringe.
- 3 In a prefilled syringe, you may see a bubble. If the prefilled syringe already has the right amount of medication, don't try to squeeze the bubble out — the bubble is safe to inject, and it's important to inject all the medication.

Giving yourself the injection

Where: The injection should be given in the fatty areas at the sides of your waist. Switch sides each time you have the injection.

How: To give the injection, follow these steps:

- 1 Sit or lie down so that you're comfortable and you can see your abdomen.
- 2 Choose a site for the injection and wipe the skin with an alcohol swab.
- 3 Gently pinch about an inch of skin. Hold the syringe at a 90 degree angle to the skin (straight out from the skin), and push the needle all the way in. To reduce bruising, do not move the needle once it's inserted into the skin. Do not pull back on the needle once it is inserted.
- 4 Slowly push the plunger to inject all of the medicine, still pinching the skin. Count to 10 before you pull the needle out.
- 5 Pull the needle straight out, at the same angle you inserted it.
- 6 Your syringe may have a safety shield. If it does, after removing the needle, push the plunger until you hear the click and the safety shield covers the needle.
- 7 Put the used syringe in a plastic or metal container with a tight lid. Don't put it right into the trash. When the container is full, close the lid and put the container in the trash.
- 8 If there is bleeding at the injection site, press a tissue on the site for up to 3 minutes. Do not rub the site — rubbing can increase bruising.



When should I call the doctor or anticoagulation provider?

Call the doctor or anticoagulation provider if you notice these symptoms while taking anticoagulant injections:

- Excessive bruising other than at injection sites (some bruising at injection sites is normal)
- Abnormal bleeding from the nose or gums
- Pink, red, or dark brown urine
- Minor bleeding or bright red blood from the bowel
- Increased menstrual bleeding
- Sudden pain in a joint (like an ankle, knee, wrist, elbow, shoulder, or hip)

CALL 911 or go to the hospital if you have:

- A sudden, bad headache and stiff neck
- Black, tarry, and smelly loose bowel movements
- Red or bloody bowel movements
- Sudden dizziness, faintness, or weakness
- Cloudy vision that comes on suddenly
- Cold or numbness in your arm or leg
- Sudden chest pain — with or without shortness of breath
- Trouble talking, or trouble moving one side of your body