

# Anticoagulant Injections

## What is an anticoagulant?

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

Anticoagulant medicines 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.
- Already have a blood clot in a blood vessel or in your lung(s).
- Have certain heart problems or a condition that puts you at risk for blood clots.
- Have had certain surgeries.
- Are starting or are already on warfarin (Coumadin) and your INR blood test results are too low. (An INR test measures how well the warfarin is working.)

## What do I need to do next?

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 medicines.
- Are allergic to pork products, since some anticoagulant medicines are made from pigs. (Note: If your faith has dietary laws against pork, talk to your religious leader.)

You should also tell your healthcare provider about any other medicine you take, including all prescriptions, over-the-counter drugs (such as allergy pills or cough syrup), inhalers, patches, vitamins, or herbal remedies.

## How to give yourself an injection

Anticoagulant injections are usually given from a pre-filled syringe with a very small needle. Your healthcare provider will show you how to inject the medicine, and it will need to be injected once or twice every day. (See step-by-step instructions on the next page.)

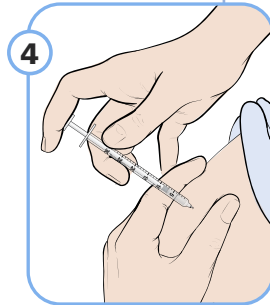
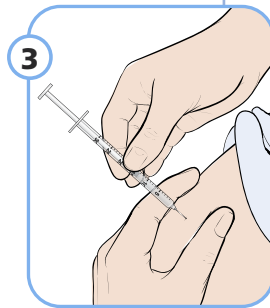
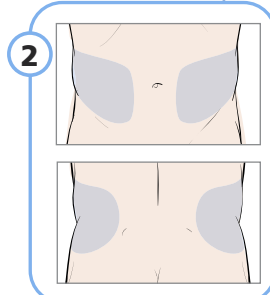
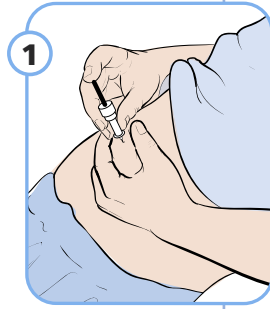
### Before the injection:

- 1 Wash your hands with soap and water.**
- 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 medicine than you should have in a dose, you may need to squeeze out a small portion of medicine before injecting the prescribed dose.
- 3 In a pre-filled syringe, you may see a bubble.** If the prefilled syringe already has the right amount of medicine, don't try to squeeze the bubble out. The bubble is safe to inject, and it's important to inject all the medicine.

## Giving the injection:

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

- 1 Sit or lie down** so that you're comfortable and you can see your abdomen (belly).
- 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 (straight out from the skin), and push the needle all the way in. To reduce bruising, do not move the needle once you put it into the skin. Do not pull back on the needle once you put it in.
- 4 While pinching the skin, slowly push the plunger to inject all of the medicine.** Count to 10 before pulling 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 my doctor?

**Call your doctor or anticoagulation specialist** if you notice these symptoms while taking anticoagulant injections:

- A lot of 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 (pee)
- A small amount of bleeding or bright red blood with a bowel movement (poop)
- Bleeding more than usual during menstruation (your period)
- 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
- A lot of red (blood) in your 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

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