



Complications: Bleeding and Blood Clots

A patient's guide



University Health Care
Thrombosis Service

Can a blood thinner make me bleed?

Yes. Blood thinners can protect you from getting blood clots but can also cause bleeding.

You may bleed if:

- You change the medicines you take
- You change the food you eat
- You have a change in your health
- You get hurt
- Your blood is too thin

How can I tell if bleeding is serious? What should I do if it is serious?

Some bleeding is minor, like:

- Bleeding gums when brushing your teeth
- Small nose bleeds that stop right away
- Easy bruising
- Longer or heavier menstrual periods

Most of the time you do not need to see your health care provider for minor bleeding. If you are ever worried that your bleeding is serious call your provider (doctor, nurse, pharmacist, physician's assistant, etc).

Some bleeding is major, like:

- A lot of red or bloody urine
- Black, red, or tarry (look like tar) stools

- Throwing up or coughing up blood (red or looks like coffee-grounds)
- Severe headaches
- New pain or swelling

If you have major bleeding get medical help right away.

Can I still get a blood clot if I am on a blood thinner?

Yes. You can still get a blood clot if you are taking blood thinners.

Clots can be serious. Most blood clots start in the legs. A clot in the leg is called a DVT (deep vein thrombosis). You can also have clots in your lungs. A clot in the lungs is called a PE (pulmonary embolism).

You can get a clot if:

- You change the medicine you take
- You change the food you eat
- You have a change in your health
- Your blood is not thin enough
- You are not moving around very much

You may need to have your medicine changed if any of these things happen to keep you from getting a clot.

If you think you have a clot, get medical help immediately.

How can I tell if I have a blood clot?

Symptoms of a blood clot in the leg or arm (DVT):

New or sudden increase in any of the following in your arms or legs:

- Warmth
- Pain
- Redness or other change in color
- Swelling

Symptoms of a blood clot in the lung (PE):

- Chest pain, pain with deep breaths, chest discomfort, or chest tightness
- Shortness of breath, or feeling like you can't take a deep breath, are panting, or feeling winded
- Feeling much more tired than normal, or you are unable to do things that you could do before

Symptoms of a blood clot in the brain:

- Unable to see or have a change in what you can see
- Very bad headache or a headache that comes on very fast
- Sudden trouble walking or moving
- Sudden trouble speaking
- Arms or legs that feel weak or numb

If you have any of these problems, call 911



University Health Care
Thrombosis Service

Thrombosis Service
(24-hour pager):
1-800-783-3735

Thrombosis Center:
(801) 585-3713

Redwood
Anticoagulation Clinic:
(801) 213-9150

Thrombosis
Research Group
(24-hour pager):
(801) 339-5005

www.healthcare.utah.edu/thrombosis

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