



# ANTICOAGULATION AND SURGERY

## **Q: I'm on anticoagulation medicine (e.g. warfarin) and I'm having surgery. What should I do first?**

A: You should tell *all* health care providers that you are taking an anticoagulant ("blood thinning") medication. You should tell your healthcare provider who ordered the anticoagulant about any surgery you are having. In addition, if you are a patient of an anticoagulation clinic, you should notify them as soon as possible. Your healthcare provider(s) should then discuss your condition and anticoagulant therapy with your surgeon. It is important to confirm that your healthcare provider(s) and surgeon have:

- 1.) discussed a plan about what to do with your anticoagulation therapy in preparation for your surgery and,
- 2.) communicated this plan to you.

## **Q: Why do my healthcare provider and surgeon need to talk?**

A: Anticoagulants such as warfarin can increase the chance of bleeding during surgery. You may need to adjust or stop your warfarin before your procedure in order to avoid bleeding complications. Depending on your condition and the type of surgery you are having, your healthcare provider and surgeon will discuss risks and benefits of continuing your anticoagulant during surgery and whether anything needs to change in your anticoagulant therapy.

## **Q: Can other anticoagulation therapies be used instead of warfarin when I am having surgery?**

A: Your healthcare provider or surgeon may decide to prescribe other anticoagulation therapies when you are having surgery. This change in medication during the time prior to, during, and after surgery is called "bridging therapy" and often involves use of an injectable anticoagulant for a short period of time. Your healthcare provider or surgeon will let you know what anticoagulation therapies may be appropriate for you.

## **Q: If my anticoagulant therapy has been stopped, when should I restart my warfarin after surgery?**

A: Your healthcare provider or surgeon will tell you when you can start taking warfarin again after surgery. If you have questions, or do not understand when to restart your medications, please ask! It is very important that you receive these instructions **before** you go home.

## **Q: I'm having dental surgery. Should I tell my healthcare provider?**

A: You should always speak with your healthcare provider if you are planning to have surgery or dental work. Some dental procedures may require the adjustment of your warfarin dose or use of another medication (e.g. medicated mouthwash). Only your healthcare provider and dentist can make this decision. It is very important that your healthcare provider and dentist have discussed your warfarin therapy and upcoming dental surgery.