

CALVERT MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

Managing Your Blood Thinner Properly



Anti-Coagulation
Clinic at Calvert Memorial Hospital

Introduction

Thank you for choosing Calvert Memorial Hospital's Anti-Coagulation Clinic. We are here to help you manage your blood thinner more easily. Now, you can obtain your lab results in 15-30 seconds with a simple finger-stick.

No more waiting for results or making another trip to pick up a new prescription. Our clinic makes it possible for you to do both in one easy visit. After the pharmacist tests your blood, he or she can adjust your dose, if needed, and answer any questions that you have about your medication.

The clinic is located on the 4th floor of the hospital. Days and hours are subject to change. Please confirm your next appointment before you leave. Most insurance plans cover this service but a **physician referral is required**. For information, call **410-414-4859**.

Why am I here?

You have been referred to the clinic because your doctor has prescribed a blood thinner or anti-coagulant medication. It is a preventive treatment to reduce your chance of developing unwanted blood clots that could hurt you.



Blood thinners are often used for patients with atrial fibrillation, deep vein thrombosis, pulmonary embolism or who have had surgery to replace a joint or heart valve.

Cover: (Pictured l-r) CMH Pharmacy Director Vince Jackson, Dr. Terezia Bush, medical director of the CMH Anti-Coagulation Clinic, Kara Harrer, PharmD, clinical coordinator, pharmacy and Melissa Wanner, PharmD.

Based on your medical history, your doctor has determined that you are prone to forming harmful blood clots. These clots can damage your vital organs by forming in your blood stream or in your heart or lungs.

If a blood clot stops the flow of blood to your brain, you could have a stroke. If you have a stroke, you may no longer be able to walk, use your arms or hands, speak or think clearly for yourself.

One of the ways we prevent clots is with medications. One of these is called warfarin (Coumadin®). When used correctly, it can save lives. While it cannot prevent all harmful clots from forming in your body, the risk is much lower if you take the blood thinner in the proper dose.

We're here to help you safely manage your blood thinner - to prevent blood clots and keep you healthy.

How does the program work?

- You will be given a specific appointment time. It is very important that you are on time for your appointments.
- If you are more than 20 minutes late we may have to reschedule your appointment for another day since there will be other patients waiting.
- Close monitoring is very important. For this reason, it is key that you keep your scheduled appointments.



- We know that sometimes things come up. If you cannot make your appointment, please call **410-414-4859** to reschedule.
- Because the pharmacist has to talk with you about your medication and any changes, we need you to stay for the entire visit.
- If you do not stay after getting your lab work done, we will have to consider that a missed appointment.
- If you are having any problems related to your blood thinner, you may make a special appointment to be seen. Call **410-414-4859** and someone will see you as soon as possible.

If you believe
your problem is serious,
go directly to the
Emergency Department or
Urgent Care Center.



How will I benefit?

By using the Anti-Coagulation Clinic at Calvert Memorial Hospital you benefit in two very important ways – convenience and safety. Now, you can obtain your lab results in 15-30 seconds with a simple finger-stick.



No more waiting for results or making another trip to pick up a new prescription. Our clinic makes it possible for you to do both in one easy visit. After the pharmacist tests your blood, he or she can adjust your dose, if needed and answer any questions that you have about your medication.

When used incorrectly or without regular blood tests, anti-coagulants (like Coumadin®) can cause serious side effects. Too much can cause you to bleed more easily and too little can put you at risk for forming more clots.

This is why regular monitoring is important. It helps to determine the amount that is safe and effective for you. Each person is different. Your dose may even change from time to time. Sometimes, a dose change is needed because there has been a change in your health, diet or other medications.

What can I expect during my visit?

First, you will get your blood pressure, pulse and weight checked. We also need to keep an accurate list of all medications that you take regularly. This includes all prescriptions, over-the-counter medications, vitamins and herbal supplements. Please bring you medicine bottles or an up-to-date list of all of your medications and doses to the clinic with you each time you visit.



Next, you will be seen by one of the pharmacists. The pharmacist will take several droplets of your blood by finger-stick, which enables immediate results to be obtained. This information allows the pharmacist to make any necessary adjustments in medication (following physician-approved protocols).

The pharmacists work closely with the nurse practitioners and physicians to provide close observation of your response to Coumadin® and to rapidly make changes when your blood test is out of range.

Patient education is an important part of the visit. We encourage you to ask any questions that you have about your blood thinner. By working together, we can help you to use your medication effectively and safely.

Visits last about 30 – 45 minutes. At the beginning, you will generally need to visit weekly. If your results are within the acceptable range, testing is usually done once every four weeks – more often, if the medication level in your blood is too high or too low and needs to be adjusted. Copies of all lab tests will be sent to your own doctor. And if a serious concern is detected, he or she will be notified immediately.

What can I do to prevent problems?

By taking a few simple safety measures you will decrease the chances of a serious problem.

Identification – it is vital that you carry a card in your wallet or purse that states you take a blood thinner. An ID bracelet or necklace with this information is also a good idea. Medical personnel must know this in case of an emergency.



Avoid alcohol – it can change the way the blood thinner acts in your body and increase the chance of bleeding. It is safest to avoid alcohol completely. But if you decide to drink, it is recommended that you not have more than one 12 oz. bottle/can of beer, one 5 oz. glass of wine, one mixed drink or one shot of hard liquor in a 24-hour period.

Watch what you eat – certain foods can affect your blood thinner. Avoid using meat tenderizers (such as Adolph's®), it can cause your stomach to bleed more easily. Certain foods such as dark, green vegetables that contain a lot of Vitamin K can counteract your blood thinner. But it is still important to eat a well-balanced diet. It is okay to eat these foods in normal size portions on a regular basis. The most important thing is for you to keep your intake consistent. Do NOT make large changes in the amount that you eat of the following:



Brussels sprouts, broccoli, spinach, lettuce, turnip greens, collard greens, kale, cabbage, green beans, herbal/green tea, liver, grapefruit and cranberry.

Tell all healthcare providers you take a blood thinner – this includes doctors, nurses, dentists and pharmacists. You are prone to bleeding more easily because it reduces your body's ability to form clots. It is a good idea to remind them before surgery, a dental procedure, starting a new medication or if you experience a major change in your health.

Ask if a medicine is safe to take with your blood thinner – some medications can change the way your blood thinner acts in your body (increasing or decreasing its effect). It is essential that every healthcare provider you see know that you take a blood thinner.



Many over-the-counter medicines can also affect your blood thinner. **AVOID** Aspirin[®], Motrin[®] (ibuprofen), Advil[®] or Aleve[®] (naproxen) unless directed by your physician. These pain relievers can make you bleed more easily, especially in your stomach. Please read the label to be sure it does not contain Aspirin[®]. If you are not sure, ask a pharmacist or call us at **410-414-4859**.

Some patients will be prescribed a small dose of Aspirin[®] to take every day. This is safe if closely monitored. Take Aspirin[®] only if instructed to do so by your doctor or by us.

Some multivitamins and meal replacement shakes (such as Ensure[®] and Slim Fast) contain Vitamin K. If you are planning to start one of these products, read the label or ask a pharmacist to find out if the product has Vitamin K. Please tell us if you start using one of these every day.

Sometimes stopping a medication or changing the amount you take can affect your blood thinner. That's why we need to know if there have been any changes. Please call **410-414-4859** if you have any medication changes (new medicines, dose changes or medications that are stopped).

How can I tell if it's an emergency?

Even if you do everything right, sometimes the unexpected happens. You suddenly notice unusual or large bruises or get a nosebleed. Or, worse still, you notice some blood in your stool. What do you do? The following guidelines listed on the next page should help.



Call your doctor or go to the Emergency Department if you:

- Get a large cut or any injury, which doesn't stop bleeding in 20 - 30 minutes, despite attempts to stop it.
- Have a nosebleed that won't stop in 20 - 30 minutes, despite attempts to stop it.
- Are in a car accident, are hit by a car or truck or have a major fall.
- Notice bright blood in the toilet after you go to the bathroom.
- Notice that your stool is black in color and sticky, like tar or coffee grounds.
- Notice your urine turns a smoky, pink or red color.
- Experience a sudden and extremely painful headache (worse than ever before).
- Have symptoms similar to a previous episode when a blood clot formed in your body.
- Lose consciousness, become paralyzed or extremely weak or lose your vision.
- Notice many large (bigger than a few inches) unusual bruises that you can't explain.

In case of an emergency, follow your best judgment. If you think you need immediate medical attention, call your physician or go the Emergency Department.

Make an appointment for the Anti-Coagulation Clinic if you:

- Notice several small bruises (less than 2 inches) that you can't explain.
- Experience two or more nosebleeds.
- Have excessive bleeding from your gums after you brush and floss your teeth.

If you have questions or concerns, call **410-414-4859** and we will return your call as soon as possible.



WHERE WE'RE LOCATED:

Anti-Coagulation Clinic
Calvert Memorial Hospital
4th floor (near Rehabilitation Services)

Park near hospital or medical office building and use main entrance. Take elevator to 4th floor.

DIRECTIONS TO CALVERT MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

From Anne Arundel County

Rt. 2 south to Rt. 4 at Sunderland
Rt. 4 south to Prince Frederick,
approximately 7 miles
Left on Hospital Road, at first traffic
light in Prince Frederick

From Charles or St. Mary's County

Rt. 5 to Rt. 231 at Hughesville
Rt. 231 east to Rt. 4 at
Prince Frederick,
approximately 12.5 miles -
Left on Rt. 4, north to CMH (1.6 miles)
Right on Hospital Road, at traffic light

From St. Mary's County

Rt. 235 to Rt. 4 at Hollywood
Rt. 4 north over Thomas Johnson Bridge
Continue on Rt. 4 north to
Prince Frederick,
approximately 20 miles to CMH
Right on Hospital Road, at traffic light



Calvert Memorial Hospital

Tradition. Quality. Progress.

100 Hospital Road, Prince Frederick, MD 20678
410-535-4000 / 301-855-1012 TDD: 410-535-5630