

# Following your blood thinner treatment plan



**UpBeat**  
By Heart Rhythm Society

## WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO STICK TO MY TREATMENT PLAN?

Taking your blood thinner medication as your doctor tells you is the most important thing you can do to lower your chance of having a stroke.

It is important to “stick to” or “be faithful with” taking medications exactly as your doctor tells you. It is also important to follow your doctor’s advice and to keep follow-up visits. Patients who take their blood thinners in the way their doctor prescribed have a much smaller chance of dangerous bleeding.

Sticking to your treatment plan and taking your medications regularly can be hard for many reasons. Some of those reasons are:

- Trying to avoid side effects of the medication
- Forgetting to take the medication
- Paying for the medication

“Patients who don’t take the right amount of blood thinner medications are **more than six times as likely to have a stroke,** and about **four times as likely to have dangerous bleeding.**”



## HOW CAN I STICK TO MY TREATMENT PLAN?

### Avoiding side effects

- Make a plan ahead of time for what you should do if you think you have a side effect
- Always take your medication exactly as your doctor tells you
- **Talk to your doctor or pharmacist openly and honestly about any problems or worries that you have. The health care team that takes care of you wants to make the best treatment plan for you — a plan that you can follow!**

### Remembering to take your medication

- Use a pillbox
- Mark on a calendar or chart every time you take a pill
- Use the alarm clock feature on a cell phone as a reminder

### Paying for the medication

Your doctor or pharmacist may be able to answer your questions about medication cost and what payment options may be available for you

### How to handle side effects

- **Bruising** is a common side effect of blood thinners. Call your doctor if (1) your bruises last more than two weeks; (2) you have signs of an infection such as more pain, swelling or fever; or (3) if your bruising is getting worse. Do not stop taking your blood thinner.
- **Nose bleeds** are more common and harder to stop when you are on blood thinners. Call 911 if: (1) bleeding does not stop in 30 minutes; (2) bleeding is extremely heavy; or (3) your heart is racing, you are dizzy or your blood pressure is high while you have the nose bleed. Even if you do not need emergency care, call your doctor to discuss the best way to manage your nose bleeds. Do not stop taking your blood thinner.
- **Bleeding** should not be ignored. Always contact your doctor immediately at the first sign of blood in your urine or stool or coughing up blood.

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### NEARLY 9 OUT OF 10 PEOPLE



with AFib who go to the emergency room because of a stroke **are not taking a blood thinner or not taking it regularly.**

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