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Paragon Orthopedics Center
Grants Pass, Oregon

Blood Thinners



What Are They and How Can They Affect My Surgery?

If you have had surgery, you know there is an exhaustive list of medications you cannot take prior to surgery because many of them affect your blood. Some you might be taking and have no idea that they can thin your blood, which is not a good thing when someone will be making incisions into your skin and need your blood to clot. Here is a look at some of the less obvious, blood-thinning medicines and help you understand how they may cause complications.

What is a blood thinner?

This is a medicine or substance that slows the time it takes your blood to form a clot (coagulate). There are times when you want your blood thinner, like after a heart attack or with a history of blood clots. During surgery however, if your blood won't clot normally your body will ooze blood during the entire surgery. This can lead to two main outcomes: 1-the surgeon cannot visualize what needs to be repaired, and 2-you can lose large amounts of blood. Surgeons take these medicines very seriously and assess each patient on them preoperatively.

What are some over-the-counter blood thinners?

Most people have heard about aspirin being a blood thinner. Did you know that taking aspirin or NSAIDS (Motrin, Ibuprofen, Naproxen, Aleve, etc) within 2 weeks of surgery or 5 days afterward can result in severe bleeding? Warfarin/Coumadin, Heparin, Plavix, Eliquis, Arixtra, Pradaxa and Lovenox are PRESCRIPTION blood thinners that need to be discontinued before surgery and require consultation with your surgeon or PCP before being stopped. In some cases you will need a short-term blood thinner as bridging therapy prior to a surgery.

Herbal medicines you might not be aware of having anti-coagulant properties

- Garlic
- Ginseng
- Ginger
- Gingko Biloba
- Turmeric

Some patients neglect to tell their doctors about these herbal medicines because they think herbs are "natural." However, they can have consequences that are as serious as the aforementioned medicines like heparin if taken before your surgery. After assessing your individual needs, we might recommend these herbal supplements be stopped at least two weeks prior to your surgery to avoid any effects.

Paragon Orthopedics Center asks that you be transparent with any supplements you are taking. Bring the containers with you for complete clarity about dosages, or take pictures of the bottles on your smartphone. After surgery, your doctor may place you on blood thinners or aspirin to prevent clots, so you should discuss when you can go back on herbal medicines that affect clotting times. Dr. Bents and Dr. Van Horne are always happy to discuss your concerns for your surgery go as smoothly as possible.

The following articles were referenced for this newsletter:

<https://www.verywellhealth.com/blood-thinners-before-during-and-after-surgery-3156855>

<https://mydoctor.kaiserpermanente.org/ncal/article/blood-thinners-to-avoid-prior-to-surgery-san-rafael-medical-center-ophthalmology-191550>

<https://www.verywellhealth.com/herbal-supplements-to-avoid-before-surgery-2709934>

