



Situational Safety: First Aid

First aid measures for patients on warfarin are similar to those for the general population. The proper action taken immediately after injury can improve recovery time, possibly reduces the severity of the injury, and reduces the risk of infection.

Cuts & lacerations

Bleeding results from most cuts or lacerations. Patients on warfarin may experience prolonged bleeding.¹ In the event of a cut, the patient should remain calm, quickly apply a clean (preferably sterile) gauze-like material, and apply steady pressure over the bandage for 20-30 minutes. The patient should also avoid unnecessary movement and elevate the injury site if possible.²

Do not remove the bandage to have a “look”. Removing the bandage often causes further bleeding because it disrupts the initial clot that has started to form on the wound. If blood soaks through the original bandage, a second bandage should be applied over the first. An adhesive can also be applied over the bandage to secure it in place.

Bumps & bruises

Injuries resulting in bumps and bruises may not seem serious at first, but can be dangerous. Bumps and bruises appear not to bleed at all, however bleeding often occurs under the skin. These injuries can be just as severe as those that cause external bleeding. Patients should remain calm and apply ice to the area several times a day.³

Sprains & strains

Injuries of the ankles and knees can cause pain and limit patient mobility. Elevating and applying ice (but not directly on exposed skin) can reduce swelling. Patients should try to elevate the injury during evening sleep. Stiffness and weakness are common for days after the injury and may make walking difficult⁴.

Patients should promptly report all injuries that cause bleeding or bruising to a healthcare professional.¹

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- 1 Bristol-Myers Squibb Company. (2007). *Medication Guide for Coumadin Tablets and Coumadin for Injection* [Package Insert]. Princeton, NJ: Bristol-Myers Squibb Company.
- 2 Mayo Clinic Staff (2008). *Cuts and Scrapes: First Aid*. Retrieved May 5, 2008, from MayoClinic.com Web site: <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/first-aid-cuts/FA00042>
- 3 Mayo Clinic Staff (2008). *Bruise: First Aid*. Retrieved May 5, 2008, from MayoClinic.com Web site: <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/first-aid-bruise/FA00039>
- 4 Mayo Clinic Staff (2008). *Sprain: First Aid*. Retrieved May 5, 2008, from MayoClinic.com Web site: <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/first-aid-sprain/FA00016>

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