

❖ **BLOOD THINNERS**

**Why do people need blood thinning medication?**

Over-the-counter blood thinning medications contain 100mg of Aspirin e.g. Astrix or Cartia. They are used to prevent a stroke or heart attack in those people that have co-existing risk factors. Usually your doctor will recommend you taking them if they feel you are at risk, and I usually do not advise starting to take it unless they do so.

**Why do I need to be careful if it is such a low dose?**

Although a small dose, you need to take it every day so the 'usual' precautions for anti-inflammatories need to be considered before taking it;

- × It is not to be used in anyone with an allergy to Aspirin or allergic to anti-inflammatories.
- × Care is needed in asthmatics, as Aspirin can trigger their symptoms in some people
- × People with stomach ulcers or conditions need to take care, as all anti-inflammatories can cause an irritation to the lining of the stomach despite taking with food. There are duentric coated tablets available in pharmacies, which allows the aspirin to dissolve and be absorbed through the small intestine and can ultimately reduce the risk of gastric bleeding. However, evidence is not conclusive as to how much protection that this coating provides in the protection of gastric bleeding.
- × If you have any disorders of the kidney you need to be careful, as it can reduce kidney function as well as increase the risk of bleeding
- × Care needs to be taken with patients requiring/undergoing surgery as clearly it can increase the risk of bleeding. Aspirin should be stopped 7 days prior to surgery; however stopping it can increase the risk of heart attack. Check with your doctor to be sure of the exact timings for your surgery.
- × Although it appears safe in dental procedures, it is best to inform your dentist that you currently take aspirin and they can advise you whether to continue or to stop taking depending upon the exact procedure being done.
- × It is considered safe at the low dose 100mg strength in pregnancy; but it is best to check with your doctor to ensure that the risks do not outweigh the benefits. It is considered to be category C and it can cause complications in birth; such as delay in labour and increased bleeding time in the newborn. So always seek advice from your doctor.
- × It appears to be safe in breastfeeding at low doses; high doses are not recommended as it can pass through the milk and cause Reye's syndrome in young children (Aspirin should not be used in children under 16 years because of this risk!)
- × It can interact with prescription medications, so always check with your pharmacist and/or doctor first
- × It can also interact with anti-inflammatories available over-the-counter and may increase the risk of side-effects if you double-up. It is best to use Paracetamol and/or Codeine for severe pain wherever possible.
- × Take care when you are shaving or gardening as you will most likely bleed more. You can use a Styptic pen on shaving nicks to try and stop the bleeding. You may also find you bruise more easily now, so you may use Arnica if you don't like the bruises on your skin!
- × Use a soft tooth brush so that you do not cause your gums to bleed too much.

**What products are available?**

All of the products contain 100mg of Aspirin and should be taken with food and only once per day.

\*Astrix tablets (very small tablets and easy to swallow)

\*Astrix capsules

\*Cartia duentric coated tablets (marketed to be gentler on the stomach as they are absorbed through the small intestine)

\*Mayne Aspirin

\*Various generic brands on the market now!