

### What medicines are used for treating chronic coronary heart disease?

**Antiplatelet medicines**, which are a type of blood thinner, are a common treatment for chronic coronary heart disease (also known as **chronic coronary syndrome**). They help to **prevent** blood clots from forming and reduce the **risk** of having a **heart attack**.



Common antiplatelet medicines include:<sup>1</sup>

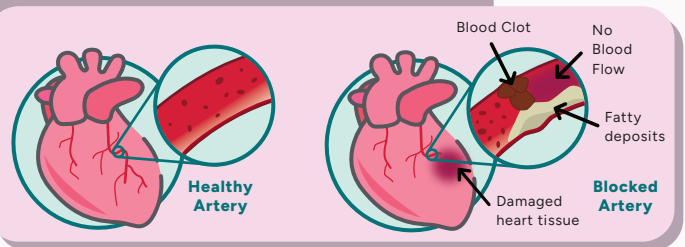
- ✓ **Aspirin**
- ✓ **Clopidogrel**
- ✓ **Ticagrelor**

### How do blood clots cause heart attacks?

Platelets are cells in the blood that clump together to make **blood clots**. They can travel to a damaged site to help bleeding stop and heal wounds.

However, blood clots can cause **serious problems** for people with long-term (**chronic**) coronary heart disease because they can **block** some or all of the blood flow in a heart artery, causing a **lack of oxygen** which damages the heart. This is known as a **heart attack**.

### What happens during a heart attack?



## Myths and facts about antiplatelet medicines

#### Myth

I can **stop** taking my antiplatelet medicine because I feel well.

#### Fact

Most people with chronic coronary heart disease have few or **no symptoms** even when they are not taking any medicines.<sup>2</sup> Taking antiplatelet medicine helps to reduce the risk of having a **heart attack**, which can happen **suddenly** and is a **life-threatening** condition.

#### What you can do?

Talk to your **doctor** if you have any concerns about taking antiplatelet medicine. Do not reduce or stop taking your medicine unless your doctor tells you to do so.



#### Myth

I do not need to **change** or **take more medicines** as I feel my current antiplatelet medicine is good enough to control my heart disease.

#### Fact

Preventing blood clots with antiplatelet medicine may not be enough to reduce the risk of heart attacks for some people, especially those with other long-term conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure and high cholesterol.<sup>3</sup> Your doctor may need to run medical tests and **adjust** your current treatments or **add** new ones to manage your overall health.

#### What you can do?

**Learn** about your condition and the medicines you are taking so you can make **informed decisions** about your healthcare and actively manage it. Discuss with your **care team** if you have any queries regarding your condition and treatment.

**Myth** Antiplatelet medicines always cause severe **bleeding**.

**Fact** Antiplatelet medicines prevent blood from clotting, but not completely, so there is a **low** risk of them causing a bleed in other parts of the body.<sup>3</sup> Your doctor will **monitor** your response to treatment and help manage any side effects if they happen.

### What you can do?

Be **careful** when doing activities that might cause an injury or a cut. See a doctor immediately if you experience serious **bleeding**, such as blood in the urine, black and sticky stools, unexplained large bruises, coughing up blood or sudden severe headache with nausea.



**Myth** I can **adjust** the **amount** of antiplatelet medicine I take daily without seeking medical advice.

**Fact** Taking **too much** antiplatelet medicine in a day can increase the risk of **bleeding**, while taking **less** antiplatelet medicine than what you have been prescribed can increase the risk of having a **heart attack**.<sup>4</sup> It is important for you to take your antiplatelet medicine **as instructed** by your doctor to get the **full benefit** of the treatment.

### What you can do?

**Discuss** with your doctor if you are considering a change in the amount of antiplatelet medicine you are taking and let them know **why** you want to do so.



**Myth** I can use **traditional medicines** or natural remedies with antiplatelet medicines or instead of them.

**Fact** Traditional medicine includes traditional Chinese medicine, traditional Indian medicine (Ayurvedic medicine), traditional Malay medicine (Jamu) and herbal medicines from other countries. Some traditional medicines and natural remedies may make your blood thinner and less likely to clot.<sup>5</sup> However, there is **little evidence** that they can **effectively** reduce the risk of a heart attack. When taken with antiplatelet medicines, some of them can increase the risk of bleeding while others can **reduce** the effects of antiplatelet medicines and increase the risk of a heart attack. Therefore, it may **not** be safe to replace or use antiplatelet medicines with traditional medicines or natural remedies without speaking to your **doctor**.<sup>6,7,8</sup>

### What you can do?

Let your doctor know if you are taking any traditional medicines or natural remedies, or if you intend to start taking them, so they can **advise** if these are suitable for you.



## Key Message

Many medicines are used to treat chronic coronary heart disease (chronic coronary syndrome). Discuss with your doctor which treatment is suitable for you and any questions you have if you are considering a change in your medicines. Heart medicines should not be stopped suddenly or changed without your doctor's advice. Connecting with other people with heart conditions may also give you support and help you cope better. You can reach out to local patient support groups if you want to meet with people with heart conditions and share your experiences.<sup>9,10</sup>



- Sources
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