



Patient & Family Guide
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Heparin to Prevent Clotting during Hemodialysis



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What is heparin?

Heparin is a type of medicine called a blood thinner.

Heparin is used to prevent blood from clotting in the dialysis lines during hemodialysis.

Why does someone on hemodialysis need this medicine?

When your blood is passing through your body and senses something it doesn't recognize, it releases chemical signals that tell your body to fix the problem. For example, when you have a cut, these signals tell your body to stop the bleeding by clotting. This can also happen when your blood passes by something that is not part of your body, like a tube.

During hemodialysis, your blood will pass through the dialysis blood lines and a dialyzer, which can cause clots to form.

How do I take heparin?

A nurse will give you heparin during hemodialysis through a line in your dialysis machine. The first dose of heparin is given at the beginning of dialysis and a small amount is given each hour during hemodialysis.

The dose will change from patient to patient depending on the amount of clotting that develops in the dialysis blood lines and dialyzer.

Are there any side effects?

If you have an arteriovenous (AV) fistula, it may take longer to stop the bleeding from needle sites after hemodialysis, and after the needles are removed.

Since heparin is a blood thinner, side effects may include:

- › Unusual bleeding, such as nose bleeds or bleeding from the gums
- › Unusual bruising

What are your questions?

Please ask. We are here to help you.

