Platelets are cells in the blood that help us make blood clots. This is a normal body function. If you have heart disease risk factors (such as smoking, high blood cholesterol, high blood pressure, or diabetes) your platelets can clump together more easily and can form a more serious blood clot. Blood clots can be a problem especially if they are in your heart, brain, or other arteries in your body. Antiplatelet medicines help to prevent these blood clots.

**Why are you taking antiplatelet medicines?**
Antiplatelet medicines stop blood clots from forming. This helps to prevent a heart attack or stroke. If you have had a heart attack, stroke, or stents placed in your heart arteries, you probably have been asked to take antiplatelet medicines. These medicines will lower your chance of having a heart attack or stroke.

**Often used antiplatelet medicines:**
- **Aspirin** and **Plavix®** (clopidogrel) or **Effient®** (prasugrel)

*If you are prescribed more than one medicine, it is important to take them both because they work in different ways to stop blood clots from forming. These medicines are often used by people who have had a heart attack, stroke, or stents placed in the heart.*

**Other oral antiplatelet medicines:**
- **Pletal®** (cilostazol) - Generally used by people with blocked arteries in their legs.
- **Persantine®** (dipyridamole) and aspirin are often taken together to prevent a stroke.
- Other antiplatelet medicines such as **Ticlid®** (ticlopidine) are also available.

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**How to Take Your Antiplatelet Medicines**

**Always Take Your Medicines Exactly As You Were Told**

1. **Always talk to your heart doctor or nurse before stopping or changing the way you take your antiplatelet medicines.**

2. **If you forget a dose you can take it later that day.** If you missed taking it entirely, do not catch up by taking two doses the next day.

3. **Ask your doctor or nurse how long you will be taking these medicines.** You may be on two antiplatelet medicines for a year or more and may stay on aspirin for a long time.

4. **Tell ALL of your doctors and nurses that you are on antiplatelet medicines especially if they ask you to take new medicines.**

5. **Before you have dental work or surgery,** ask your dentist or surgeon to speak with your heart doctor about whether or not you should stop taking your antiplatelet medicines. You may be able to stay on aspirin, even if you need to stop Plavix® or Effient®.

**Instructions For Taking Your Antiplatelet Medicines**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Dosage</th>
<th>When to Take</th>
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You can reach your doctor or nurse at: ___________________________
**What can I expect?**
You will bleed and bruise more easily (the good news is that this means the medicine is working).

**When should I call my doctor?**
- If you have headaches, dizziness, chest pain, stomach upset or pain, nausea, diarrhea, constipation, muscle pain, or severe back pain.
- If you have bleeding in your stool (dark or black colored stool), blood in your urine, or you get nosebleeds that are hard to stop.
- If you throw up and it is brown or coffee colored.
- If you feel very tired, weak, short of breath, or look pale.
- If you have a sudden severe headache, confusion, fever or chills, yellow colored skin or eyes.

**Helpful Hints**
- Accidents do happen. Put pressure on the bleeding area for 5 minutes or until the bleeding stops. Have band aids close by to stop the bleeding.
- When traveling:
  - Always have extra doses of your medicine.
  - When flying, never pack your medicines in your checked baggage.
- Take your blood pressure at home on a regular basis and let your doctor or nurse know if it is above 135/85 mm Hg.

**Medicines Can Be Expensive!**
*If you cannot afford these medicines*, please talk to your doctor or nurse. There are support programs that can often help with the cost.

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**Diet and Exercise**

**Eat a Heart Healthy Diet and Exercise Each Day**

**Diet**
- Eat a diet with lots of vegetables, fruits, whole grains, low-fat sources of protein, and unsaturated fats (like olive oil).
- Read food labels to watch your fat, calories, and salt (sodium).
- Keep the amount of salt (sodium) you use to 2300 mg a day or less.
- Ask your doctor or nurse about your weight:
  - Your weight goal should be_______________.
  - You need to lose______ pounds every month until you reach your weight goal.

**Exercise**
- Walk, jog, swim, bike, or use exercise equipment like a treadmill every day for 30-60 minutes.
- Stretch your muscles for 5-10 minutes after you exercise.
- Add balance and strength exercises to your routine. Better balance and strength can reduce your risk of falling.
- If you have had a heart attack or stroke, ask your doctor or nurse how much exercise you can do. Join a cardiac rehabilitation program if there is one nearby.

**Ideas for including activity into your life**
- Take a daily walk with your family or friends.
- Use the stairs instead of the elevator.
- Park farther away in the parking lot when going to the mall or grocery store.
- Walk to the corner store instead of driving.