



Patient Education Sheet

What is Coumadin or Warfarin?

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Coumadin or warfarin is an anticoagulant. *Anti* means against and *coagulant* refers to blood clotting. An anticoagulant helps to reduce clots from forming in the blood. This medication is used to help prevent and treat blood clots. The generic name for Coumadin is warfarin sodium.

Why do I need to take warfarin?

Your physician has prescribed warfarin for you because your body may make blood clots that you do not need. Too much blood clotting can cause serious medical problems such as stroke, heart attack, and inability to breathe.

- Warfarin may be prescribed to help prevent and treat blood clots:
 - ✓ In the legs and/or lungs
 - ✓ Associated with an irregular, rapid heartbeat called atrial fibrillation
 - ✓ Associated with valve replacement in the heart.
- If you have had a heart attack or stroke, warfarin may be used to:
 - ✓ Lower the risk of another heart attack or stroke
 - ✓ Lower the risk of death
 - ✓ Lower the risk of blood clots moving to other parts of the body, such as the lungs

Your physician will discuss with you the specific reason why he/she has prescribed this medication for you.

How does warfarin work?

Your liver makes clotting factors that help the blood to clot and then prevent bleeding.

Warfarin works by blocking the steps that form clots.

Because of the way warfarin works, there are foods that you should be concerned about while taking this medication. Foods that are high in Vitamin K will change the way that warfarin affects your body because Vitamin K helps your body to make clots. To maintain a steady drug effect, it is important that you consume a similar amount of Vitamin K every day. Each day, you should not eat much more or much less Vitamin K than is usual for you.

The best approach is to monitor your intake of foods with medium and high amounts of Vitamin K. Dark leafy green vegetables tend to have a high vitamin K content. See the food list attached for more information. Avoid cranberries and cranberry juice, as there may be a possible interaction between warfarin and cranberry.

What are the most important points I should know about warfarin?

Warfarin is very important to your health, but it can cause very serious bleeding problems if not taken properly or monitored by your physician.

- Take your warfarin **exactly** as prescribed to lower the chance of blood clots forming in your body. Do not change your dosing without your physician's orders. Take your warfarin around the same time of the day, every day.
- It is very important to see your physician regularly and to get your blood work drawn regularly to monitor your response to warfarin. The blood test you will have is called a PT/INR. Your physician may need to change your dosing from time to time based on your blood work results.

- ➔ Call your physician right away if you have symptoms of bleeding. These include:
 - Pain, swelling, or discomfort
 - Headaches, dizziness, or weakness
 - Unusual bruising—bruises that develop without a known injury
 - Nosebleeds
 - Bleeding gums
 - Prolonged bleeding from cuts
 - Menstrual bleeding or vaginal bleeding that is heavier than normal
 - Pink or brown colored urine
 - Red or black bowel movements
 - Coughing up blood
 - Vomiting blood or liquid that looks like it has coffee grinds in it.
- ➔ Discuss with your physician any medications that you are currently taking, including herbals, vitamins, and over the counter drugs, to make sure that they do not interact with your warfarin.
- ➔ Also, do not start or stop taking vitamin pills such as Vitamins K, E, A or large amounts of C without first checking with your physician.
- ➔ Always tell any healthcare provider caring for you that you take warfarin.
- ➔ Wear or carry identifying information stating that you take warfarin.
- ➔ You should not take warfarin if you are pregnant or planning on becoming pregnant. Speak with your physician if this is your situation.
- ➔ Do not take warfarin if you are allergic to it.

What is the dose for warfarin?

Warfarin is very patient specific. Doses vary from patient to patient depending on each individual's situation. Your physician will monitor your PT/INR and dose your warfarin based on your needs. The dose may need to be adjusted periodically.

What are some potential drug interactions?

Any medications that can potentially increase bleeding risk may interact with your warfarin. Some examples include ibuprofen, naproxen, aspirin (some patients may need to take both aspirin and warfarin per their physician orders), or other medications containing these products. Other drugs can affect how warfarin works in the body, such as anti-arrhythmics and antibiotics.

Do not take any herbal products without reviewing them with your physician. This includes bromelains, danshen, coenzyme, Q₁₀, don quai, garlic, Ginko biloba, St. John's wort, and herbal teas with coumarin derivatives (i.e. sweet woodruff, melilot/sweet clover, and tonka beans).

What should I do if I have surgery and I am taking warfarin?

If you have any invasive procedure planned, including dental work, it is important to let your health care provider who is performing the procedure know that you take warfarin prior to scheduling the procedure. A plan can then be developed prior to the procedure regarding your dosing.

What should I do—I forgot to take my warfarin yesterday?

NEVER take an extra dose of warfarin to catch up a missed dose from the previous day. If you forget to take a dose, tell your physician that you missed a day to see if there should be any changes in your next dose to keep your blood levels consistent.

It is very important to let any healthcare provider who orders a new medication for you know that you are taking warfarin. Keep your diet stable, especially foods high in vitamin K. Take your warfarin at the same time each day to maintain a steady level.

Source: Bristol-Meyers Squibb.(2006). *Understanding your Coumadin Therapy.* www.COUMADIN.com

Some Common Foods With High Amounts of Vitamin K¹:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brussel Sprouts, boiled, ½ cup • Coleslaw, 1 cup • Collards, boiled, ½ cup • Endive, raw, 2 cups • Hijiki (seaweed), 3.5 oz • Kale, raw, 3.5 oz • Lettuce, bib, raw, 3.5 oz • Lettuce, red leaf, raw, 3.5 oz • Mint, raw, 3.5 oz • Mustard Greens, raw, 3.5 oz • Onion, green scallion, raw, 2/3 cup • Parsley, cooked, ¾ cup • Parsley, raw, ¾ cup • Spinach, boiled, ½ cup • Swiss Chard, raw, 3.5 oz • Tea, dried black leaves, 3.5 oz (brewed is only 0.05 micrograms in 3.5 fl oz) • Tea, dried green leaves, 3.5 oz (brewed is only 0.03 micrograms in 3.5 fl oz) • Watercress, raw, 3 cups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 225 micrograms • 119 micrograms • 374 micrograms • 231 micrograms • 327 micrograms • 817 micrograms • 122 micrograms • 210 micrograms • 230 micrograms • 170 micrograms • 207 micrograms • 450 micrograms • 270 micrograms • 324 micrograms • 830 micrograms • 262 micrograms • 1428 micrograms • 250 micrograms
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Some Common Foods With Medium Amounts of Vitamin K²

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apple Peel, green, 3.5 oz • Artichoke, globe, 1 medium • Asparagus, boiled, ½ cup • Cabbage, green, boiled, ½ cup • Canola Oil, 2 Tbsp. • Okra, boiled, ½ cup • Soybean Oil, 2 Tbsp. • Soybeans, raw, ½ cup • Soybeans, roasted, ½ cup • Squash, summer, peel only, 3.5 oz • Broccoli, boiled, ½ cup 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 60 micrograms • 42 micrograms • 72 micrograms • 73 micrograms • 40 micrograms • 32 micrograms • 55 micrograms • 47 micrograms • 37 micrograms • 80 micrograms • 88 micrograms
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¹ Contain more than 80 micrograms of vitamin K per serving.

² Contain 31 to 80 micrograms of vitamin K per serving.