

# Discharge Instructions: Taking Coumadin (Warfarin)

Your doctor prescribed Coumadin (warfarin) for you. Be sure to take it as directed. Because Coumadin helps keep your blood from clotting, you also need to protect yourself from injury, which could lead to excessive bleeding.

## Guidelines for Medication Use

- Follow the fact sheet that came with your medication. It tells you when and how to take your medication. Ask for a sheet if you didn't get one.
- Do not take Coumadin during pregnancy because it can cause birth defects. Talk to your doctor about the risks of taking Coumadin while pregnant.
- Take Coumadin at the same time each day.
- If you miss a dose, take it as soon as you remember—unless it's almost time for your next dose. In that case, skip the dose you missed. Don't take a double dose.
- Keep appointments for blood (protime/INR) tests as often as directed.
- Don't take any other medications without checking with your doctor first. This includes over-the-counter medications and any herbal remedies.

## Other Precautions

- Tell all your healthcare providers that you take Coumadin. It's also a good idea to carry a medical identification card or wear a medical ID bracelet.
- Use a soft toothbrush and an electric razor.
- Don't go barefoot. Don't trim corns or calluses yourself.

## Keep Your Diet Steady

Keep your diet pretty much the same each day. That's because many foods contain vitamin K. Vitamin K helps your blood clot. So eating foods that contain vitamin K can affect the way Coumadin works. You don't need to avoid foods that have vitamin K. But you do need to keep the amount of them you eat steady (about the same day to day). If you change your diet for any reason, such as due to illness or to lose weight, be sure to tell your doctor.

- Examples of foods high in vitamin K are asparagus, avocado, broccoli, and cabbage. Oils, such as soybean, canola, and olive oils are also high in vitamin K.
- Alcohol affects how your body uses Coumadin. Talk to your doctor about whether you should avoid alcohol while you're using Coumadin.

- Herbal teas that contain sweet clover, sweet woodruff, or tonka beans can interact with Coumadin. Keep the amount of herbal tea you use steady.

## **Possible Side Effects**

Tell your doctor if you have any of these side effects, but don't stop taking the medication until your doctor tells you to. Mild side effects include the following:

- More gas (flatulence) than usual
- Bloating
- Diarrhea
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Hair loss
- Decreased appetite
- Weight loss

## **When to Call Your Doctor**

Call your doctor immediately if you have any of the following:

- Trouble breathing
- Swollen lips, tongue, throat, or face
- Hives or painful rash
- Black, bloody, or tarry stools
- Blood in your urine
- Vomiting or coughing up blood
- Bleeding gums or sores in your mouth
- Urinating less than usual
- Yellowing of the skin or eyes (jaundice)
- Dizziness
- Severe headache

- Easy bleeding or bruising
- Purple discoloration of your toes or fingers
- Sudden leg or foot pain
- Unusually heavy menstrual period
- Any chest pain