

In Emergency, notify:

Name _____
Relationship _____
Address _____
Phone _____
Doctor's Name _____
Doctor's Phone _____



**Look inside for an
emergency notification
card to keep in your
wallet or purse.**

Warfarin
(Coumadin®)

*Taking your
medication
safely*



Harvard Pilgrim
Health Care



Harvard Pilgrim
Health Care *of New England*

Welcome

This booklet is designed to provide you with important information about warfarin (you may also know it by the brand names Jantoven® or Coumadin®) to help you take this medication safely and effectively. It also includes a dosage calendar for you to track your blood tests and any dose changes.

What is warfarin?

Warfarin (brand name Coumadin® or Jantoven®) is a medication that is used to prevent blood clots from forming. Blood clots can block normal blood flow and can cause pain, or worse, break off into pieces and go to the heart, or brain, causing a heart attack or stroke, or the lung, causing a pulmonary embolism. Warfarin does not dissolve clots that already have formed, but it is used to prevent new clots from forming or existing clots from becoming larger. It works by increasing the amount of time it takes for blood to clot.

How should I take

- Take your warfarin dose at the same time every day.
- If you forget to take a dose, tell your doctor.

Doctors often prescribe warfarin for patients with atrial fibrillation, heart valve replacement, recent orthopedic surgery, deep vein thrombosis (DVT), pulmonary embolism or stroke.

How much warfarin you need may be influenced by illness, other medications, alcohol, tobacco or even dietary changes. Too much warfarin may cause you to bleed. Too little may let a harmful clot form. **To make sure your dose is in the safe range, you need regular blood tests.**

warfarin?

- Never take a double dose of warfarin, unless instructed by your doctor.
- Warfarin can be taken with or without food.

Why are the blood tests so important?

To be sure you are on the right dose of warfarin, your doctor will order a blood test called a prothrombin time (protime or PT, for short). The **PT** numbers are then reported as an **INR** (International Normalized Ratio). PT/INR numbers tell your doctor exactly how fast your blood is clotting, information that is absolutely necessary to decide whether your dosage of warfarin needs to change.

When you start taking warfarin, you may need frequent PT/INR tests until the correct dose is determined. Thereafter, PT/INR tests will be needed regularly (usually at least once a month) while you are taking the medication to keep your PT/INR in the best range for your medical condition. Based upon your medical condition and response to warfarin

therapy, your doctor will determine your warfarin dose. Discuss with your doctor the PT/INR range that is right for you. It is very important that you **always go for the blood tests scheduled by your doctor.**

What should I know about taking other medications?

Warfarin interacts with many other drugs, including prescription and non-prescription (over-the-counter) drugs and nutrition/herbal supplements. Other medications can change the way warfarin affects your body. In some cases your doctor may need to change the other medications, or your warfarin dose may need to be changed.

Some of the drugs that may interact with warfarin include:

- certain prescription medications;
- non-prescription medications, such as:
 - * ibuprofen (Motrin[®], Advil[®], Nuprin);
 - * aspirin
 - * aspirin-containing ointments and skin creams (Aspercreme[®]);
 - * naproxen (Aleve[®]);
 - * acetaminophen (Tylenol[®]); and
 - * ulcer and stomach medications, such as cimetidine (Tagamet[®]), omeprazole (Prilosec[™]), Pepto-Bismol[®];
- vitamin supplements containing vitamin K; and

Be sure to...

- check with your doctor before starting, changing or stopping any medication;
- tell any doctor you see about all of the medications you are taking.

- some herbal medicines, such as St. John's wort, ginkgo, or garlic supplements.

Patients receiving warfarin should limit their intake of acetaminophen to no more than 2,000 mg of acetaminophen per day for no more than a few days. Patients needing to take larger doses of acetaminophen (or for longer periods) should have more frequent monitoring of INR.

Tell your doctor if you are taking any of these medications.

When should I call my doctor?

The most serious side effect from warfarin is bleeding. Watch for these warning signs and call your doctor immediately if you experience:

- cuts that don't stop **bleeding**,
- increased menstrual flow or vaginal bleeding,
- nosebleeds,
- bleeding gums,
- coughing blood, or throwing up blood (may look like coffee grinds),

- unusual **bruising** for unknown reasons, or
- red or dark brown urine or red or black stools.

If your warfarin dose is not high enough, you may develop a blood clot, DVT or pulmonary embolism (clot in your lungs). The first symptoms associated with blood clots are most commonly felt in the legs. Call your doctor if you experience:

- swelling of the affected area; or
- warmth, pain or redness in the affected area.






If a blood clot is small, it may not cause symptoms. In some cases, a pulmonary embolism (which causes difficulty in breathing) is the first sign that you have a clot.

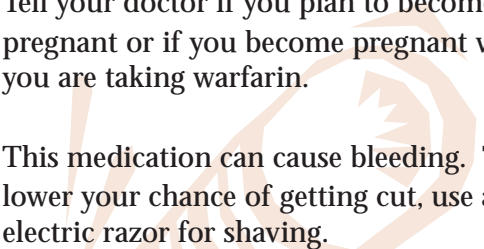
What should I know about my diet while I'm taking warfarin?

- Eat a sensible, balanced diet.
- Avoid major changes in your diet.

- Keep the amount of vitamin K in your diet consistent. Nutritious foods like broccoli, Brussels sprouts, collard greens and spinach are part of a healthy diet. But green, leafy vegetables such as these, and certain vegetable oils (such as canola or soybean oil) contain large amounts of vitamin K. Some legumes such as lentils and chickpeas contain high amounts of vitamin K. Because vitamin K helps the blood to clot, it has a direct impact on the effect of warfarin. **Don't avoid these foods**, just try to keep the amount of vitamin K in your diet consistent.
- It is best to avoid alcohol use when taking warfarin. Speak to your doctor about the risks of moderate alcohol use associated with taking warfarin.
- Avoid cranberry juice or cranberry products because they may increase the risk of bleeding.

Remember...

-  It is important to always go for your PT/INR blood tests to keep your INR in the range that your doctor recommends.
-  Do not start, stop or change any medication except on the advice of your doctor. Tell your doctor about all prescription and non-prescription (over-the-counter) drugs that you are taking.
-  Significant changes in your diet may require changes in your dosage of warfarin. Before changing your diet, check with your doctor to see if you will need more frequent blood tests.
-  Ask your doctor what to do if you accidentally miss a dose. Never take a double dose of warfarin.
-  Call your doctor if you have any unusual bleeding or bruising.

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- 📌 Tell anyone giving you medical or dental care that you are taking warfarin. Carry an identification card (you can use the attached card at the back of this booklet) or wear a bracelet indicating that you take warfarin.
 - 📌 Talk to your doctor before beginning a new exercise program.
 - 📌 Tell your doctor if you plan to become pregnant or if you become pregnant while you are taking warfarin.
 - 📌 This medication can cause bleeding. To lower your chance of getting cut, use an electric razor for shaving.

Use this calendar to keep track of your dose of warfarin and PT/INR results. Check with your doctor before starting or stopping any medications. Be sure to get regular testing of your INR, usually every month.

Date of Test	PT/ INR Result	Warfarin Dose	Instructions

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I am using warfarin (Coumadin®) for

This medication is used to prevent harmful blood clots from forming.
Please tell this immediately to anyone providing medical or dental care to me.

Name _____ D.O.B. _____

Other Medical Conditions: _____

Other Medications: _____

Medication Allergies: _____

