

# Your Guide to Taking Warfarin

Diagnosis \_\_\_\_\_

Monitoring Doctor \_\_\_\_\_ Doctor Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Notes \_\_\_\_\_

## What is warfarin?

Warfarin is a pill that lowers the body's ability to make blood clots. Warfarin does not get rid of clots you have now. It does help stop clots from getting bigger and helps stop new clots from forming.

There is more than one kind of warfarin. The generic name is warfarin, and the brand names are Coumadin® or Jantoven®. It is best to stick to taking just one kind and not switch or change from one brand to the other.

## How to take it:

Take your warfarin at the same time each day. It's best to take it at night. You must be sure to take the exact dose or amount that your doctor tells you to take. Never skip a dose and never take a double dose.

## What to do if you miss one dose:

If you forget to take your warfarin, take the missed pill as soon as you can if it is on the same day. Do not take extra or twice as much warfarin the next day to make up for a missed pill.

## What to do if you miss more than one dose:

You must call and tell your doctor if you miss one or more days of taking your warfarin pill.

## What to do if you need dental work or surgery:

If you plan to have dental work, you must be sure to tell your dentist you take warfarin. If you need to have surgery of any kind, it is very important that your surgeon knows you take warfarin. You must also be sure to discuss plans for dental work or surgery with the doctor who monitors your warfarin.

## Blood tests:

While you are taking warfarin, you will need frequent blood tests to make sure you are taking the right dose or amount. The test is called International Normalized Ratio (INR), and it tells the doctor who monitors your warfarin how long it takes your blood to make a clot. Your doctor will want your test result to be within a certain range. If the test result is higher than the range, you may be at risk for bleeding. If the test result is lower than the range, you may be at risk for forming blood clots. Based on your test result, your doctor may change the dose of warfarin you need to take.

It is very important that you get these blood tests done as often and for as long as your doctor advises. It is also very important that you take the exact dose your doctor tells you to take.

## Side effects:

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While taking warfarin, you are at greater risk of bleeding, since warfarin makes it harder for your blood to form clots. If you have any of these symptoms or signs of bleeding, call your doctor or seek medical attention right away:

- Headache that does not go away after taking an acetaminophen (Tylenol®)
- Sudden faintness or weakness
- Throwing up blood – may look bright red, or maroon to brown in color
- Pink or red colored urine
- Red, maroon or tarry, black stool
- Large bruises you cannot explain
- Pain and swelling in joints
- Unusual heavy blood flow during your menstrual period or new vaginal bleeding
- Bleeding that does not stop quickly from cuts, nosebleeds or from the gums when brushing your teeth
- If you fall or hit your head

## Precautions:

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- Tell your medical and dental care providers you are taking warfarin.
- Wear a medical alert bracelet or necklace that says you take warfarin.
- Carry a card that says you take warfarin in your wallet at all times.
- Use a soft toothbrush.
- Get all of your prescriptions filled at the same pharmacy.
- Do not play contact sports.
- Keep the drug away from extreme heat or cold.
- Drinking alcohol can change the effects of warfarin. Talk with your doctor about what and how much you have to drink.
- Warfarin cannot be taken if you are pregnant. If you are pregnant or become pregnant, let your doctor know right away.

## Interactions

### (How other pills can affect warfarin):

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- Tell your doctor before you stop, start or change taking any prescribed or over-the-counter pills.
- Be sure to tell your doctor about any pills you take that are prescribed by another doctor.
- Do not take aspirin unless approved by your doctor. This includes other medicines that have aspirin in them, such as: Alka-Seltzer®, Pepto-Bismol®, cold and flu pills and syrup, or Aspercreme® skin ointment. These can increase your risk for bleeding.
- Check with your doctor before you take Acetaminophen (Tylenol®), Ibuprofen (Motrin®, Advil®, Nuprin®), Naproxen (Aleve®, Anaprox®), or cold and flu pills and syrup with these in them. These can make you more at risk for bleeding.
- Get approval from your doctor before taking herbal supplements. They may affect how your warfarin works.
- Check with your doctor to get approval before taking dietary supplements, such as any vitamins and minerals. These may affect how your warfarin works.
- Certain antibiotics can affect warfarin. Be sure to tell any doctor who prescribes an antibiotic for you that you take warfarin.

## Warfarin and herbal interactions:

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### Herbs that may increase the *risk of bleeding* while taking warfarin:

- Angelica root
- Anise
- Arnica flower
- Asafoetida
- Bogbean
- Borage seed oil
- Bromelain
- Capsicum
- Carnitene
- Celery
- Chamomile
- Clove
- Danshen/salvia root (salvia miltiorrhiza)
- Devil's claw (harpagophytum procumbens)
- Dong quai (angelica sinensis)
- Fenugreek
- Feverfew/parthenolide (tenacetum parthenium)
- Garlic (allium sativum)
- Ginger (zingiber officianale)
- Ginko (ginko biloba)
- Grape seed
- Horse chestnut
- Lavage root
- Leech
- Licorice root
- Meadowsweet
- Onion
- Papain/papaya extract (carica papaya)
- Parsley
- Passionflower herb
- Policosanol
- Poplar
- Quassia
- Red clover
- Rue
- Sweet clover
- Turmeric
- Vitamin A
- Vitamin E (alpha-tocopheral)
- Willow bark
- Wintergreen oil

### Herbs that may increase the *risk of blood clots* while taking warfarin:

- Acerola
- Avocado
- Black psyllium
- Blonde psyllium
- Cherokee rosehip
- Coenzyme Q10 (ubiquinone, ubidecarenone)
- Ginseng: American (panax quinquefolius)
- Ginseng: Oriental (panax ginseng/ginsana)
- Ginseng: Siberian (eleutherococcus senticosus)
- Great plaintain
- Green tea (camellia sinensis)
- Rose hip
- Smartweed
- Vitamin C
- Watercress
- Wheatgrass

## Eating: warfarin and vitamin K

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The amount of vitamin K you eat can affect how well warfarin works. It is very important to eat a balanced diet and a **consistent amount of foods with vitamin K**.

Refer to the lists grouped into high, moderate and low level vitamin K foods. Use these lists to help you keep track of how much vitamin K you consume.

**The most important thing is to be sure to eat the same amount of foods with vitamin K each week.**

This will keep the amount of vitamin K in your body at a steady level.

Always talk to your doctor before making any changes in what you eat. This includes changing your diet for weight loss or gain. It is important that you do not make any drastic changes to your diet on your own. Making a change to your diet for any reason could mean your doctor may need to change the dose of warfarin you take. So it is very important that you talk to your doctor first.

Call your doctor if you are not able to eat for a few days in a row, for any reason. Not eating your normal diet can affect how well your warfarin works. Also call your doctor if you are vomiting or have diarrhea for more than one day.

**In addition to monitoring your consumption of foods containing vitamin K, also be aware of the following:**

- Papaya and mango, as these foods can increase your risk of bleeding.
- Cranberry juice/cranberry products, as this fruit can also increase your risk of bleeding.
- Avocado, as it can increase your risk of blood clots.
- Oils – such as olive, canola, soybean and vegetable – can increase your risk of blood clots.
- Alcoholic beverages – talk to your doctor about what kind of and how much alcohol you drink.

**Resources and additional information:**

<http://www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/foodcomp/Data/SR18/nutrlist/sr18list.html>

<http://patients.uptodate.com>

**High level vitamin K foods:**

*Serving size = ½ cup*

Beet greens – fresh, cooked, boiled, drained  
Collard greens – fresh, frozen, cooked, drained  
Kale – fresh, frozen, cooked, boiled, drained  
Spinach – fresh, frozen, canned, cooked, boiled, drained  
Turnip greens – frozen, cooked, drained

**Moderate level vitamin K foods:**

*Serving size = ½ cup*

Broccoli – fresh, frozen, cooked, boiled, drained  
Brussels sprouts – fresh, frozen, cooked, drained  
Dandelion greens – cooked, boiled, drained  
Mustard greens – cooked, boiled, drained  
Onions, spring or scallion (includes top and bulb) – raw  
Turnip greens – fresh, cooked, boiled, drained

**Low level vitamin K foods:**

*Serving size = ½ cup or as noted below*

Asparagus – frozen, cooked, drained  
Bread crumbs – dry, grated, seasoned  
Broccoli – raw  
Cabbage – cooked, boiled, drained  
Celery – cooked, boiled, drained  
Cole slaw (*serving = ¾ cup*)  
Cucumber with peel (*serving = ½ large*)  
Endive – raw  
Green leaf, romaine  
Lettuce (butterhead, iceberg) – raw (*serving = ½ head*)  
Okra – fresh, frozen, cooked, boiled, drained  
Parsley – raw (*serving = 5 sprigs*)  
Peas – podded, frozen, cooked, boiled, drained  
Plums – dried (prunes), stewed  
Rhubarb – frozen, cooked  
Sauerkraut – canned, solids and liquids  
Spinach – raw

## Dose and PT/INR tracking:

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Date	PT Result	INR Result	Warfarin Dose	Date Next PT/INR Due	Notes

## Coumadin ID card:

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Please fill out this card, cut along the dotted line and keep it handy in your wallet.

**I am taking the prescription drug warfarin.**  
*Please immediately tell this to anyone providing medical care to me.*

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Name

\_\_\_\_\_

Birth Date \_\_\_\_\_ Blood Type \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Contact Name

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone

***Talk to your doctor if you have questions.***