

WARFARIN (COUMADIN®) Patient Education Handout

What is warfarin?

- Warfarin (the brand name is also called Coumadin®) is a blood thinner. It is used to prevent blood clots from forming.

Why do I have to take warfarin?

- To prevent blood clots if you are at risk for clots.
- If you have already had a blood clot.
- If you have an irregular heartbeat.
- If you have a mechanical heart valve.

What is a blood clot?

- A blood clot is when your blood clumps together.
- This is not supposed to happen and when it does, the clot can break apart and possibly cause a stroke or pulmonary embolism (blood clot in lungs).

When do I take my warfarin?

- Take this medicine at the same time every day, usually in the evening.



Do I have to change my diet while I am taking warfarin?

- Too much Vitamin K can cause your blood to clot more easily while you are taking warfarin.
- Green, leafy vegetables, like broccoli and spinach, have Vitamin K.
- Some vegetables have more Vitamin K than others.
- Eat the same amount of green, leafy vegetables every week.
- If you change your diet, tell your doctor.



Can I play sports while I am taking warfarin?

- Avoid playing contact sports or participating in high risk sport activities (examples: football, boxing, ice hockey, dodgeball)



Important information for females:

- Warfarin can cause birth defects to an unborn baby. Do not take warfarin if you are pregnant or planning to become pregnant.
- Your doctor can prescribe another form of blood thinner in these situations.

Do I have to get my blood checked?

- Yes, you will go to the clinic or a special laboratory to get your blood checked. You will find out your PT and INR levels.
- At first you will go more often. This will help your doctor make sure you are getting the right dose of warfarin.
- Your warfarin dose may be changed based on your lab results.

What does "PT" and "INR" mean?

- PT stands for Prothrombin Time.
- INR stands for International Normalized Ratio.
- Both of these tests measure how fast your blood clots.

What do the numbers mean?

- Higher numbers mean that your blood is thinner.
- Your doctor will decide your special goal INR level.

What are the side effects that could happen when I take warfarin?

Warfarin can increase your risk for bleeding and bruising

Tell your doctor if you have any of these side effects:



- Bleeding
 - Nosebleeds, cuts that take longer to stop bleeding, gum bleeding, heavy bleeding with menstrual period
 - Pink or brown urine, red or black stool or vomit
- Bruising
 - Easy bruising with light or no contact
- Rash

Get immediate medical attention if you have:



- Severe headache
- Head injury
- Serious injury to other parts of body
- Bleeding that will not stop after pressure is applied for at least 10 minutes
- Difficulty talking or weakness on one side of body
- Chest pain or difficulty breathing

What else should I tell my doctor?

- Did you miss any doses?
- If you are sick with diarrhea, fever, or infection.
- Any planned surgeries? Any dentist visits or procedures?
- If you start or stop any new medications, especially antibiotics.
- Always tell your doctor and pharmacist what medications you are taking.

Can other medications change my INR or increase my risk of bleeding?

Yes, this is why it is very important to ask your doctor before you start or stop any medications.



- Examples:
 - Antibiotics
 - Pain medications: Aspirin, Ibuprofen, Naproxen
 - Herbal supplements: Ginseng, Garlic, Ginkgo
 - Supplements with Vitamin K
 - Anti-seizure medications

Tablet Strengths of Warfarin:

1 mg = Pink	5 mg = Peach
2 mg = Purple	6 mg = Teal
2.5 mg = Green	7.5 mg = Yellow
3 mg = Brown	10 mg = White
4 mg = Blue	

Brand and generic products have matching colors for each strength

If you have any questions about warfarin, please contact:

Children's Medical Center Dallas

The Heart Center

Monday through Friday
8am-5pm
Phone: 214-456-2333
Fax: 214-456-6154

The Center for Cancer and Blood Disorders (CCBD) Hemophilia and Thrombosis Program

Monday through Friday
7:30am-4:30pm
Phone: 214-456-2379
Fax: 214-456-5097