

My Warfarin Therapy



Important Information for Patients Taking the Medication Warfarin (Coumadin[®])

Patient Name: _____

Warfarin Provider: _____

Phone Number for Questions: _____

What is warfarin (Coumadin®)?

- Warfarin is a medication.
- It is used to prevent blood clots from forming in the body.
- Some people call it a “blood-thinner”.
- It does not really thin the blood.
- Warfarin works in the liver to decrease active clotting factors. This makes it take longer to form a blood clot.

Why am I taking warfarin (Coumadin®)?

- You are taking warfarin to prevent or treat a blood clot.
- Blood clots can form in veins or arteries.
- Blood clots can also form in the heart or on heart valves.
- If part of a blood clot breaks off, it can travel to the lungs or to the brain.
- If a blood clot goes to the brain, it can cause a stroke.
- Warfarin is used to prevent blood clots from forming.
- People with these problems may take warfarin:
 - **Atrial Fibrillation or Atrial Flutter**
 - This is an abnormal heart rhythm.
 - Blood clots can form in the heart.
 - The clot could go to the brain and cause a stroke.
 - **After a stroke**
 - **After a heart attack**
 - **DVT (deep vein thrombosis)**
 - This is a blood clot. It is usually in the leg.
 - Warfarin can prevent more blood clots.

- **PE (pulmonary embolism)**
 - This is a blood clot in the lung.
 - Warfarin can prevent more blood clots.
- **Heart valve disease**
 - Blood clots may form in the heart.
- **Heart valve replacement**
 - Blood clots may form on the heart valve.

How does warfarin (Coumadin®) work?

- Warfarin blocks your liver from using vitamin K.
- Vitamin K is needed to make blood clotting factors.
- Vitamin K is found in foods like green vegetables.
- Warfarin can stop clots from forming and keep clots from getting bigger.
- Warfarin does **not** destroy blood clots.

How long does it take for warfarin (Coumadin®) to work?

- It can take 5 days for the full effect.
- You may need to use injections of heparin until warfarin takes effect.

How much warfarin (Coumadin®) should I take?

- Everyone needs a different amount of warfarin.
- Your provider will check blood tests to determine how much warfarin you need
- It is important to know what strength of warfarin you take.
 - Always check the color of the tablets when you get them from the pharmacy.
 - If the color is different, check with the pharmacy and your provider before taking.
- Take only the dose your provider says.

When should I take warfarin (Coumadin®)?

- You should take warfarin at the same time each day.
- Most patients take warfarin at night.

What could happen if I forget to take my warfarin (Coumadin®)?

- Try not to miss doses.
- Even missing one dose can affect your blood test.
- It is very important to remember to take your warfarin at about the same time each day.
- **Do not double your dose to “catch up”. This can be dangerous.**
 - If you have trouble remembering to take your medicine, you may want to get a pill box.
- If you have questions, check with your warfarin provider.

What blood tests do I need?

- Your provider will be checking the PT and INR.
- The PT is the prothrombin time. It is the time it takes for your blood to form a clot.
- The INR is the International Normalized Ratio. It is used to monitor the warfarin (Coumadin®).
- Most people have an INR of 1.0 before they start taking warfarin.
- The goal range for people taking warfarin is between 2.0 and 3.0 *or* between 2.5 and 3.5.
 - Your provider will tell you your INR goal.
- If the INR is below 2.0, you could form a blood clot more easily.
- If the INR is above 3.5, you could bleed more easily.
- If the INR is not in your goal range, your provider may change your dose of warfarin.

When will my blood be tested?

- When you start warfarin, you might need a blood test once or twice a week.
- When your results are in your goal range and stable, you will need to be checked **at least** once a month.
- It is important to come to **all** your appointments.
- If you are not checked regularly, you could have problems with bleeding or blood clots.

What are the side effects of warfarin (Coumadin®)?

- Bleeding is the most common side effect.
- Minor bleeding can happen even when your INR level is at goal.
- Minor bleeding can be small bruises, bleeding gums or nose bleeding.
- Some people get a rash or lose hair. These effects are very rare.

What are some things I should check for when taking warfarin (Coumadin®)?

- Every time you use the bathroom you need to check for bleeding.
 - Check your urine and your stool.
 - Look for red or dark brown urine.
 - Look for bright red or black stool.
 - If you have bleeding, let your provider know.
- Sometimes women have heavy menstrual bleeding when they take warfarin (Coumadin®).
 - Let your provider know if this happens to you.
- If you ever cough up a lot of blood or vomit blood, go to the emergency center.
 - If you vomit blood it may look like coffee grounds.
- You may bleed more easily while taking warfarin (Coumadin®).

- Be careful with knives and razors.
- If your INR is too high, you can have more bleeding:
 - Severe headache or stomachache
 - Unexplained bruising
 - Frequent nose bleeds or bleeding gums
 - Any bleeding that will not stop

If you have any of these problems, call your doctor or your warfarin provider or go to the hospital emergency center.

What are the signs that my INR is too low?

- Blood clotting
 - *You may not have any signs.*
 - Sudden weakness in arm or leg
 - Numbness or tingling
 - Changes in vision
 - Sudden slurred speech or unable to speak
 - Dizziness or fainting
 - New pain, swelling and redness in arm or leg
 - New shortness of breath or chest pain

If you have any of these problems, call your doctor or your warfarin provider or go to the hospital emergency center.

Does warfarin (Coumadin®) interact with any other medicines?

- Warfarin interacts with many medications.
- Warfarin interacts with some dietary supplements and vitamins.

- **Whenever you start or stop a medicine, herb or vitamin, you should check with your provider.**
- Sometimes the warfarin dose may need to be changed.
- Please check with your provider even if the medicine was prescribed by another doctor.

Can I take over-the-counter medicines?

- Some medications are fine to take.
- Others can cause bleeding when used while taking warfarin (Coumadin®).
- Never take aspirin for *pain*. If your doctor told you to take one aspirin a day, make sure you let your warfarin provider know.
- Do not take other products containing aspirin:
 - Excedrin®
 - Alka-Seltzer®
 - Ascriptin®
 - Bayer®
 - Bufferin®
 - Ecotrin®
 - Empirin®
 - Nyquil®
 - Pepto Bismol®
 - BC Powder®
- Do not take these medications for pain:
 - Ibuprofen
 - Advil®
 - Motrin®
 - Nuprin®
 - Medipren®
 - Excedrin IB®
 - Haltran®
 - Midol 200®
 - Pamprin IB®
 - Naproxen
 - Aleve®
 - Naproxyn®

- Anaprox[®]
 - Ketoprofen
 - Orudis[®]
- If you need to take a medicine for mild pain, you can use acetaminophen (Tylenol[®]).
- Do not use more than 2000 mg of acetaminophen per day.
 - No more than 6 of the regular strength (325 mg) tablets
 - No more than 4 of the extra-strength (500 mg) tablets

Is it safe to drink alcohol while taking warfarin (Coumadin[®])?

- It is safest to avoid alcohol while taking warfarin.
- If you decide to drink alcohol, you should have no more than 1 drink per day or 2 drinks on a special occasion.
 - 1 drink = 1 beer = 1 glass of wine = 1 cocktail/shot
- If you drink more than this, your INR could increase and you could bleed.

Should I limit my activities while taking warfarin (Coumadin[®])?

- You should avoid activities that could cause bleeding.
- Walking, jogging, swimming and gardening are safe.
- If you change your activity level, let your warfarin provider know.

What if I get sick?

- Being sick can change the way you respond to warfarin (Coumadin[®]).
- Any of these problems can cause your INR to go up and increase your risk of bleeding:
 - Heart failure episode
 - Fever
 - Flu
 - Viral or bacterial infection
 - Nausea and vomiting
 - Diarrhea
- If you have any of these problems, contact your warfarin provider.

- Remember to contact your warfarin provider before starting an antibiotic.

How does my diet affect warfarin (Coumadin®)?

- Foods that have a lot of vitamin K may decrease your INR.
- Foods that have a lot of vitamin K are usually leafy green vegetables like spinach, broccoli, mustard greens and collard greens.
- The table at the end of this book lists foods that have a high amount of vitamin K.
- In general, you should not eat more than one serving (about ½ cup) per day of food high in vitamin K.
 - The most important thing is to keep your diet as consistent as possible.
- Do not binge on foods high in vitamin K.
- Do not eat any of these:
 - Liver
 - Grapefruit juice or Grapefruit
 - Cranberry juice
 - Mango or Papaya
- Let your warfarin provider know if you are planning to change your diet.

Who should know I am taking warfarin (Coumadin®)?

- Every doctor and healthcare provider should be told that you are taking warfarin.
- This includes:
 - Your dentist
 - Your pharmacist and
 - The pharmacy or pharmacies where your prescriptions are filled
- You may want to wear an identification bracelet that states you take warfarin (Coumadin®).

What about pregnancy?

- Do not take warfarin if you are pregnant.
- Talk to your warfarin provider if you are planning to become pregnant.

Important Reminders

- Take your warfarin exactly as instructed.
- Take your warfarin at the same time each day.
- Look for signs of bleeding and clotting and report them right away.
- Tell your warfarin provider if you have changes in:
 - Your medications
 - Your diet
 - Your activity level
- Tell your warfarin provider if you have:
 - Fever
 - Diarrhea
 - Vomiting
 - Loss of appetite
- Limit alcohol to 1 – 2 drinks per day.
- Keep all appointments or call right away to reschedule.

Warfarin (Coumadin®) acts by interfering with Vitamin K, reducing your body's ability to form blood clots.

Vitamin K Content of Cooking Oils		
Oil	Amount	Vitamin K (mcg)
Soybean	1 tbsp	28
Canola	1 tbsp	20
Olive	1 tbsp	8

Foods Very High in Vitamin K		
Food Type	Serving Size	Vitamin K (mcg/serving)
Kale, frozen, boiled	½ cup	573
Kale, fresh, boiled	½ cup	531
Spinach, frozen, chopped	½ cup	513

Spinach, canned	½ cup	494
Spinach, fresh, boiled	½ cup	444
Collard greens, fresh, boiled	½ cup	418
Beet greens, fresh, boiled	½ cup	349
Turnip greens, fresh, boiled	½ cup	265
Green Tea (dried leaves)	1 tbsp	215
Mustard greens, fresh, boiled	½ cup	210
Lettuce, butterhead (includes boston / bibb), raw	1 head	167
Brussels Sprouts, frozen, boiled	½ cup	150
Brussels Sprouts, fresh, boiled	½ cup	110
Broccoli, fresh, boiled	½ cup	110
Onions, spring or scallion (including tops/bulb), raw	½ cup	103

Foods Moderately High in Vitamin K

Food Type	Serving Size	Vitamin K (mcg/serving)
Broccoli, frozen, boiled	½ cup	92
Pistachios	½ cup	75
Spinach, raw, chopped	½ cup	73
Asparagus, frozen, cooked, boiled, drained	½ cup	72
Sauerkraut, canned	½ cup	67
Pumpkin Seeds, dried, roasted	½ cup	54
Lettuce, Green Leaf, shredded	½ cup	50
Cucumber, with peel, raw	1 large	49
Mayonnaise, regular	½ cup	49
Spinach, raw	1 leaf	48
Broccoli, raw, chopped	½ cup	44
Watercress, raw, chopped	½ cup	43
Black Tea (dried leaves)	1 tbsp	39
Cabbage, cooked, boiled, drained	½ cup	37
Avocado, without skin and seed	1 fruit	36
Rhubarb, frozen, cooked, with sugar	½ cup	35
Prunes	½ cup	32
Food Type	Serving Size	Vitamin K (mcg/serving)
Okra, fresh, boiled	½ cup	32
Black Eye Peas, boiled	½ cup	32
Lettuce, Romaine, shredded	½ cup	28
Celery, cooked, boiled, drained	½ cup	28
Endive, shredded	½ cup	28
Bread crumbs, dry, grated, seasoned	½ cup	28

Vitamin K mcg amounts from the USDA National Nutrient Database for Standard Reference, Release 18

Over the Counter Medications

Cold and Allergy

☺ Okay to Use	☹ Do Not Use
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Benadryl® Products ▪ Robitussin® Products ▪ Sudafed® Products ▪ Tylenol® Products ▪ TheraFlu® Products 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Aleve® Products ▪ Advil® Products ▪ Motrin® Products ▪ Alka-Seltzer® Products ▪ Dristan® Sinus

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Claritin® Products 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ NyQuil® Elixirs ▪ Any Sore Throat Products containing menthol
--	--

Heartburn

☺ Okay to Use	☹ Do Not Use
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Axid® (nizatidine) ▪ Pepcid® (famotidine) ▪ Gas-X®, Phazyme® (simethicone) ▪ Gaviscon® ▪ Mylanta® ▪ Maalox® ▪ Roloids® ▪ Tums® 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Alka-Seltzer® ▪ Tagamet® (cimetidine) ▪ Pepto-Bismol® (bismuth subsalicylate) ▪ Zantac® (ranitidine) ▪ Prilosec® (omeprazole)

Constipation

☺ Okay to Use	☹ Do Not Use
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Colace® (docusate sodium) ▪ Peri-Colace® (docusate and senna) ▪ Dulcolax® (bisacodyl) ▪ Metamucil® (fiber) ▪ Senokot® (senna) ▪ Surfak® (docusate calcium) ▪ Milk of Magnesia® ▪ Fleets® Enemas and Phospho-Sodas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mineral Oil ▪ Pepto-Bismol®

Diarrhea

☺ Okay to Use	☹ Do Not Use
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Immodium® (loperamide) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Kaopectate® (bismuth subsalicylate)

Pain and Fever

☺ Okay to Use	☹ Do Not Use
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tylenol® (acetaminophen) ▪ Anacin® Aspirin-Free ▪ Excedrin® Aspirin-Free ▪ Percogesic® 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Advil®, Motrin® (ibuprofen) ▪ Aleve® (naproxen) ▪ Bayer®, Anacin®, Excedrin®, Ecotrin®, St. Joseph®, BC Powder®, Bufferin®, Ascriptin® (aspirin*) ▪ Doan's® (magnesium salicylate) ▪ Orudis KT® (ketoprofen)

****Aspirin may be taken once daily for heart conditions if told to do so by your doctor***

Herbs and Supplements

☺ Okay to Use	☹ Do Not Use
---------------	--------------

- Multivitamins
- Prenatal Vitamins
- Calcium
- Calcium with vitamin D

- Cranberry
- Dan-shen
- Dong quai
- Fenugreek
- Garlic
- Ginger
- Ginkgo
- Ginseng
- Grapefruit juice
- Green tea
- Papain
- St. John's Wort

****There are many more supplements that may interfere with Coumadin (warfarin). Please check with a health care provider before taking any new herbs or supplements**

Useful Phone Numbers

Location	Phone Number
Acres Home Health Center	281-448-6391
Aldine Health Center	281-985-7600
Baytown Health Center	281-427-6757
Ben Taub Hospital	713-873-2000
Casa de Amigos Health Center	713-222-2272
Dental Center	713-757-0572
E.A. "Squatty" Lyons Health Center	281-446-4139
El Franco Lee Health Center	281-454-0500
Gulfgate Health Center	713-495-3700
LBJ Hospital	713-566-5100
Martin Luther King Jr. Health Center	713-547-1000
Northwest Health Center	713-861-3939
Quentin Mease Hospital	713-873-3700
People's Health Center	713-272-2600
Settegast Health Center	713-633-2020
Strawberry Health Center	713-982-5900
Thomas Street Health Center	713-873-4000
Ask My Nurse	713-634-1110