

WARFARIN

(COUMADIN)

WHY is this medication given?

Coumadin is the brand name for warfarin. Warfarin (coumadin) is an anticoagulant. ANTI means against, and COAGULANT refers to the clotting of blood. Warfarin is a medication ordered to prevent harmful blood clots from forming in your blood vessels, lungs, and around your heart. It does not dissolve blood clots. Sometimes it is referred to as a blood thinner. Warfarin can be prescribed for a specific period of time or it can be prescribed indefinitely. Your health care provider will tell you how long you will have to take it. You will need to have your blood drawn for a test called a protime (PT) or International Normalized Ratio (INR) while taking this medication to adjust your warfarin dose.

HOW should this medication be taken?

- Warfarin comes in oral tablets in various strengths. Different strengths of warfarin are different colors.
- Take Warfarin at the same time each day, preferably in the evening, with a full glass of water.
- It is suggested to use a pill box, calendar, or some other method to keep track of taking your medication. It is very **important to take this medication exactly as ordered**. If you forget to take a dose, take it as soon as remembered on that particular day. Do not take a double dose of this medication. Inform your health care provider if you missed any doses at the time of your next check-up or lab test.

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- Never stop taking your warfarin unless you are told to do so by your health care provider.

What SIDE EFFECTS can this medication cause?

- Unusual bleeding:
 - Vomiting blood or a dark material that looks like coffee grounds
 - Nose bleeds
 - Black, tarry or red bowel movements
 - Bruises that appear for no obvious reason
 - Bleeding from cuts that do not stop with pressure
 - Frequent bleeding from the gums
 - Red or dark tea colored urine
 - Excessive vaginal bleeding or menstrual flow
- Nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea that lasts more than 2 days
- Tiredness, fever, chills, sore throat, itching rash, or mouth sores

What SPECIAL PRECAUTIONS should I follow while taking this medication?

Your health care provider will use a blood test called a protime (PT) or International Normalized Ratio (INR) to adjust your warfarin dose. The blood test measures the amount of time that it takes your blood to clot. The target INR range depends upon the medical condition that is being treated. Warfarin works by causing the Protime and INR to increase, which prevents clots from forming easily. If your PT or INR is too high, you may have problems with

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bleeding. The blood test is the only way to measure the delicate balance between bleeding and clotting. This is why it is very important to keep your lab appointments and to take your medication exactly as ordered. At first, your blood will be drawn frequently to check your PT and INR results. After you are on the warfarin for a while and your PT and INR results are stable, the blood test will be done less frequently.

Carry identification with you describing your medication regimen at all times and inform all health care personnel that you are taking an anticoagulant before you have any lab tests, treatments, dental work, or surgery.

Consider purchasing a MedicAlert identification tag if you are going to be taking Warfarin for a period of time.

Use a soft bristled toothbrush and floss teeth gently to avoid trauma to the gums.

Use an electric razor while on warfarin to avoid any cuts.

Apply pressure for a minimum of 5 minutes to any cut, wound, injection site, or venipuncture site.

Do not take aspirin or aspirin containing products unless specifically instructed to do so by your health care provider.

Many foods/products contain Vitamin K which counteracts the blood thinning effect of warfarin. Therefore it is

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important to know which foods and products contain high levels of Vitamin K in order to maintain a consistent level in your system. Altering your intake of Vitamin K will make your INR fluctuate. The goal is to maintain a consistent intake of foods rich in Vitamin K.

Vitamin K rich foods:

Asparagus, beans, broccoli, brussel sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, collards, green tea, kale, milk, mustard greens, spinach, swiss chard, turnips, yogurt.

Other products containing Vitamin K:

Chewing tobacco

Many over the counter multivitamins

Alcohol ingestion can increase your INR. Binge drinking can have a very harmful effect on your clotting time. Limit any alcohol consumption (beer, wine, or hard liquor) to 1 to 2 drinks per day.

Warfarin interacts with many prescription and non-prescription medications as well as herbal or dietary supplements. Therefore, it is important to report any changes in your medications or dietary supplements to your primary health care provider. Certain medications and supplements may change your body's response to warfarin by either increasing your risk for bleeding or decreasing the effectiveness of the warfarin.

Those that **may increase bleeding risk:**

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Acetaminophen (Tylenol), Amiodarone, Antifungal agents, Antithyroid drugs, Beer/wine, Bishop's weed, Boldo, Borage seed oil, Cephalosporins, Chamomile, Chondroitin, Cimetidine (Tagamet), Cod-Liver oil, Danshen, Dong Quai, EDTA, Evening Primrose, Fish oils, Flaxseed, Fluvoxamine (Fluvox), Forskolin, Garlic, Ginkgo, Ginger, Grape seed, Grapefruit, Heparin, Ipriflavone, Leech, Licorice Root, Lycium, Mesoglycan, Milk Thistle, NSAIDS such as ibuprofen, Papain, Paroxetine (Paxil), Passion Fruit, Quassia, Quinalones, Reishi Mushroom, Resveratrol, Salicylates (Aspirin), Sweet Clover, Tiratricol, TMP/SMX, Tonka bean, Vinpocetine, Vitamin E (over 400 iu/day), Willow bark, and Wintergreen oil.

Those that **may decrease warfarin effectiveness against clots:**

Acerola, Barbiturates, Cabbage, Carbamazepine (Tegretol), Chorella, Chronic alcohol use, Coenzyme Q-10, Corticosteroids, Ginseng, Great plantain, Green Tea, Phenytoin (Dilantin) , Rose hip, St. John's Wort, Vitamin C (>500mg/day), Vitamin K, Watercress, Wheatgrass.