

Name: _____

A Guide to Taking Warfarin

(Brand names: Coumadin[®] or Jantoven[®])



What You Need to Know

- * Why you are taking warfarin
- * Why it is important to take your warfarin exactly the way you are told
- * What symptoms and side effects you must tell your warfarin manager
- * Who to call for all medicine changes and if you have any side effects from any medicine
- * Why it is important to eat a diet that has about the same amount of vitamin K each week
- * Why you MUST keep your INR blood test appointments to monitor your warfarin
- * When is the date of your next INR blood test
- * Where you will have your INR blood tests



The information in this educational booklet is to help you manage your warfarin therapy. It is not a replacement for medical advice. Always follow the instructions from your doctor and warfarin manager.

Your Information

You are taking warfarin for:

Medical Condition

Your warfarin manager is:

Their phone number is: _____

Your INR Target Range is: _____ to _____

Your Next INR Blood Test

The date of your next INR blood test is:

Your next blood test will be done by:

Testing Facility or Visiting Nurse Association

Remember!

- ❖ It is very IMPORTANT to keep all of your:
 - Doctor's appointments
 - INR blood test appointments
- ❖ If you must miss an appointment, call and make a new one right away.
- ❖ Warfarin pills come in different sizes and shapes. Always be sure that you are taking the right amount of warfarin.
- ❖ If you have any questions or problems with your warfarin, call your doctor or warfarin manager right away.
- ❖ If you are discharged from the hospital or a rehabilitation facility, call your warfarin manager as soon as you get home.
- ❖ If you are asked to stop warfarin for any reason, call your warfarin manager.



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Warfarin, Coumadin[®], and Jantoven[®]

Did you know?

Warfarin, Coumadin[®], and Jantoven[®] are the same medicine.

- Warfarin (warf-ah-rin) is the generic name of the medicine.
- Coumadin[®] (Koo-muh-din) and Jantoven[®] (Jan-toe-ven) are the brand names.

Let your doctor and warfarin manager know if the company that makes your warfarin changes!

Warfarin is a medicine that is sometimes called an “anticoagulant” or “blood thinner.” However, warfarin does not thin the blood. Warfarin causes the blood to take longer to form a clot. There are many reasons why patients take warfarin.

- Warfarin can help keep a blood clot from forming.
- Warfarin can also help keep a blood clot from getting bigger.





What to Tell Your Doctor and Warfarin Manager

Patients taking warfarin need to be followed closely by a warfarin manager. A warfarin manager may be your doctor, nurse, pharmacist, physician assistant, or a warfarin clinic.

Tell your doctor and warfarin manager if you:

- ❖ Fall often
- ❖ Drink alcohol and the number of drinks you have each day
- ❖ Have or have had in the past:
 - Bleeding problems
 - Stomach or intestinal problems
 - Liver problems
 - Kidney problems
 - High blood pressure
 - Cancer
- ❖ Are planning to become pregnant, are pregnant, or are breastfeeding

Blood Tests



Why do I need blood tests when I am on warfarin?

There are many things that affect how warfarin works. Because of this, the effects of warfarin must be carefully watched with blood testing. The blood tests help your warfarin manager know how much warfarin you need to take.

What is the blood test I need while taking warfarin?

The blood test you need is called **P**rothrombin **T**ime, protime, or **PT**. This blood test is used to measure the time it takes for blood to clot. The PT results are reported as an **I**nternational **N**ormalized **R**atio or **INR**. Your INR blood test helps your warfarin manager decide which dose of warfarin is right for you.

There is a chance of bleeding or forming a blood clot while taking warfarin.

Because of this, it is important to have your blood tested when your warfarin manager tells you to!

Your INR Target Range

Your INR target range depends on why you need warfarin. Your doctor or warfarin manager will tell you your INR target range.

Your INR target range is on Page 1.

Blood Tests

How often will I need to test?

You may need an INR test 2 or 3 times each week when you first start warfarin. As your INR and warfarin dose become more stable, you may be able to test your INR less often. You will probably have a blood test at least every 4 weeks. You may need to test more often if you become ill or have any changes in your other medicines.

Communication Plan

Make sure you have a plan for communicating with your warfarin manager. Include how and when your warfarin manager will contact you after each blood test. Based on the results of your blood test, your warfarin manager will tell you how much warfarin to take.

- Give your warfarin manager all of the telephone numbers where you can be easily reached.
- If your warfarin manager does not contact you after your blood test, call your warfarin manager.
- If you miss a blood test or cannot go to one, contact your warfarin manager as soon as possible to talk about it.
- Try to have your INR blood test at the same lab each time. If you need to go to a different lab, make sure your warfarin manager knows.
- If possible, plan to have your blood test early in the day. Avoid weekends and holidays. This may help your warfarin manager get the results on the same day.

If any of your contact information changes, it is important to tell your warfarin manager immediately!



Taking Warfarin

How much warfarin do I need to take?

Your warfarin manager will tell you how much warfarin to take. The amount you take and when you take it may be different than other patients.

After each INR blood test, your daily dose of warfarin may change. This is to keep your INR in your target range. It is normal for your dose to change over time.

INR Tests Are for Your Safety!

- Taking **too little** warfarin can cause a low INR and increase your chance of forming a blood clot.
- Taking **too much** warfarin can cause a high INR and increase your chance of bleeding.



When do I take my warfarin?

Take your warfarin exactly the way your doctor or warfarin manager tells you to. Take it at the same time every day. For many people, the best time is in the evening.

What if I forget to take my warfarin?

- If you forget to take your warfarin and you remember later the same day, take it as soon as you remember.
- If you forget to take your warfarin and you do not remember until the next day, do not take your missed day's dose. Take only your regular dose for the current day, and call your warfarin manager.

Remember--never take a double dose if you miss a dose!

Taking Warfarin

What does warfarin look like?

- Each pill strength is a different color.
- Your pills may be round or oval.
- On one side, there is a line in the middle of the pill. If you are told to, you may split your pills along this line. **However, only split them once.**
- If your pills change shape or color, call your doctor, warfarin manager, or pharmacist.

Never change your warfarin dose without talking with your warfarin manager first.

Sample of generic warfarin (Barr Pharmaceuticals, Inc.)



Sample of generic warfarin (Taro Pharmaceutical Industries)



Sample of Coumadin®



Sample of Jantoven®



Taking Warfarin

Side Effects

Please tell your doctor or warfarin manager immediately if you have any of these side effects!

- ❖ Bleeding that takes more than 10 minutes to stop
- ❖ Bleeding gums
- ❖ Bruising more than usual
- ❖ A period that is heavier than usual
- ❖ Nosebleeds
- ❖ Allergic reaction, like hives or itching



These side effects are possible but are rare:

- ❖ Skin rash
- ❖ Hair loss
- ❖ Toes that are painful and turn purple or dark in color

Safety Tips!

- Use a pill box to help you remember to take your warfarin every day.
- Use a soft bristled tooth brush to avoid bleeding from your gums.
- Keep your warfarin alert wallet card or bracelet on you at all times.
- Be careful with sharp objects.
- Do not leave anything on your floor or stairs that you could trip over.
- Always wear a seatbelt in the car.
- Always wear a helmet when biking and doing snow sports.



Taking Warfarin

Danger Signs

Call **911** immediately if you have any of the following:

- ☞ Chest pain or discomfort in your arms, back, neck, or jaw
- ☞ Trouble breathing
- ☞ Slurred speech or sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- ☞ Severe headache, confusion, weakness, or numbness
- ☞ Coughing up large amounts of bright red blood
- ☞ Throwing up blood, which may be bright red or looks like coffee grounds
- ☞ Bleeding that you cannot stop
- ☞ Fall or injury to your head



Call your **doctor or warfarin manager** for other problems including:

- ☞ Bright red blood in your stool
- ☞ Black or tar-like stools
- ☞ Bruises that just appear or grow larger
- ☞ Blood in your urine which may be red, pink, or brown
- ☞ Redness or warmth to an area of your body which may mean that a new clot is forming

Lifestyle

Changes in your lifestyle can affect your INR.

If anyone tells you to stop taking your warfarin including a dentist, a doctor, or a surgeon, tell your doctor and warfarin manager.



Other changes to tell them about, include:

- **If you have any serious falls or injuries, especially to your head**
- If you develop new health problems or have any visits to the hospital
- If you are sick or have vomiting or diarrhea for more than 48 hours
- If you are drinking 2 or more alcoholic drinks each day
- If you have a change in your daily activity or exercise routine
- If you are pregnant, thinking about becoming pregnant, or breastfeeding



Tips for Traveling

- Carry your medicines with you at all times
- Do not put your medicines in checked baggage
- Do not leave your medicines in the car
- Know if you need to plan for INR blood tests during your trip
- If you will miss your test when traveling, please call your warfarin manager

Medicines and Supplements

Always check with your warfarin manager before you start, stop, or change any medicines, over-the-counter medicines, or nutritional supplements.

Many medicines and supplements increase your risk of side effects when taken with warfarin. Here are some examples:

Prescription Medicines

- Pain medicines with acetaminophen, like Fioricet[®], Tylenol #3[®], Vicodin[®], Lortab[®], Norco[®], Percocet[®]
- Amiodarone
- Antibiotics (all types)
- Antifungals, like miconazole or fluconazole (Diflucan[®])
- Chemotherapy
- Clopidogrel (Plavix[®]) or prasugrel (Effient[®])
- Prednisone

Over-the-Counter Medicines

- Acetaminophen (Tylenol[®]) and all products with acetaminophen
- Aspirin and all products with aspirin
- Cimetidine (Tagamet[®])
- Ibuprofen (Motrin[®], Advil[®], Nuprin[®])
- Naproxen (Aleve[®])
- Ranitidine (Zantac[®])

Multivitamin Supplements

- Multivitamins with more than 25 mcg of Vitamin K

Nutritional Supplements and Herbal Remedies

- All vitamin K supplements
- Boost[®] and Ensure[®]
- Co-enzyme Q-10
- Ginkgo
- Fish oil and flaxseed oil

Please keep warfarin and all medicines out of the reach of children!

Your Diet and Vitamin K

Vitamin K is important for a healthy diet. Warfarin works against vitamin K, so it is important to know how much vitamin K is in the foods you eat. Changing how much vitamin K you eat can change how much warfarin you need to take.

Vitamin K and INR

↑ *More Vitamin K* = *Lower INR* ↓

Important Facts

You can eat foods with vitamin K while you are on warfarin. However, you should eat about the same amount of vitamin K each week.

Pay attention to portion size and serving size to know how much vitamin K you are eating.

- The size of your fist is the same as one cup.
- Vitamin K is measured in micrograms. Micrograms are abbreviated as mcg.

Be Consistent!

Eat about the same amount of vitamin K each week.

Pay attention to portion size and serving size to know how much vitamin K you are eating.



Vitamin K Content of Foods

The foods are listed in alphabetical order in each group. For more food listings, please go to www.ptinr.com/cafe-ptinr/vitamin-k-finder

VERY HIGH (more than 500 mcg/serving)	Serving	mcg/Serving
Beet greens,cooked	1 cup	697
Collards, frozen, cooked	1 cup	1059
Dandelion greens, cooked	1 cup	579
Kale, cooked	1 cup	1062
Spinach, frozen, cooked	1 cup	1027
Turnip greens, cooked	1 cup	529
HIGH (200-500 mcg in each serving)	Serving	mcg/Serving
Broccoli, cooked	1 cup	220
Brussels sprouts, frozen, cooked	1 cup	300
Mustard greens, cooked	1 cup	419
Onions, scallions, raw	1 cup	207
MEDIUM (25-199 mcg in each serving)	Serving	mcg/Serving
Artichokes, cooked	1 cup	25
Asparagus, frozen, cooked	1 cup	144
Blackberries, raw	1 cup	29
Blueberries, raw	1 cup	28
Broccoli, raw	1 cup	89
Cabbage, cooked	1 cup	163
Cabbage, raw	1 cup	53
Celery, cooked	1/2 cup	28
Cucumber, raw, with the peel	1 large	49
Endive, raw	1 cup	115
Green beans, canned	1 cup	53
Kiwi, raw	1 med	30
Lettuce, iceberg	1/4 head	32
Lettuce, Romaine	1 cup	57
Mung beans, raw	1 cup	34
Noodles, including egg and spinach	1 cup	161
Okra, frozen, cooked	1 cup	88
Parsley, raw	10 sprigs	164
Peas	1 cup	48
Pickles	1 pickle	25
Prunes, stewed	5 prunes	65
Pumpkin, canned	1 cup	39
Rhubarb, cooked	1 cup	50
Soybeans, cooked	1 cup	33
Spaghetti sauce, ready to serve	1 cup	35
Spinach, raw	1 cup	145
Tuna fish, light, canned in oil	3 oz	37
Mixed vegetables, frozen, cooked	1 cup	43

Reference: US Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Research Service. 2011. USDA National Nutrient Database for Standard Reference, Release 24. Nutrient Data Laboratory Home Page, www.ars.usda.gov/ba/bhnrc/ndl



Helpful References and Web Links

- ❖ *Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality: Your Guide to Taking Coumadin®/Warfarin Therapy*
www.ahrq.gov/consumer/btpills.htm
- ❖ *The Coalition to Prevent Deep-Vein Thrombosis*
www.preventdvt.org
- ❖ *Clot Care Online Resources*
www.clotcare.com
- ❖ *Information on Medical Alert Bracelets, Watches, and Necklaces*
www.medicalert.org/home/Homegradient.aspx
www.americanmedical-id.com
www.laurenshope.com
- ❖ *The North American Thrombosis Forum*
www.natfonline.org
- ❖ *The National Blood Clot Alliance*
www.stoptheclot.org
- ❖ *Patient Self Testing Information and Devices*
www.hemosense.com/patient/pst.shtml
www.poc.roche.com/coaguchek/home.do
www.itcmed.com





Safety Reminders

- ❖ Watch for signs of bleeding or clotting. Tell your doctor or warfarin manager right away if you have any.
- ❖ Take your warfarin exactly the way your warfarin manager tells you.
- ❖ Keep all of your appointments for your blood tests.
- ❖ Tell your warfarin manager about any other medicines you are taking or if you start or stop any other medicines.
- ❖ Tell your warfarin manager about any changes in your health including:
 - Illness
 - Urgent doctor's appointments
 - Visits to the hospital
 - If you are thinking about becoming pregnant, are pregnant, or are breastfeeding
- ❖ Tell you warfarin manager when you have changes in your daily routines, like diet, activity, and how much alcohol you drink.
- ❖ Tell anyone giving you medical or dental care that you are taking warfarin.
- ❖ ***Carry your warfarin medical alert identification card at all times. There is one in the front of this booklet. Or purchase a warfarin ID bracelet.***

Please Help Us

If you have any comments or suggestions on how we can improve this booklet, please email us at:

warfaringuide@partners.org

Thank You!

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