

Coumadin

Patient Education

When starting on Coumadin, it is extremely important to get it checked no later than ONE week after you begin taking the medication. If you are having any issues before that one week (bleeding, don't feel well, etc) it is important for you to call us and get in sooner.

Please let us know if you start antibiotics at any time while on Coumadin as it may call for a change in your dosage.

Warfarin (Coumadin) belongs to the class of medication called anticoagulants. It is sometimes called a blood thinner, although it does not actually thin the blood. It helps prevent clots from forming in blood vessels and in the heart or from getting any bigger, but it does not dissolve blood clots, however, over time, the blood clot may dissolve on its own. There are other blood thinners that you may be given in the hospital or even at home for a short amount of time: Heparin, Lovenox, or Fragmin to help dissolve a clot. These drugs are administered either by vein (intravenous) or just under the skin into the subcutaneous fat.

Coumadin is used for the treatment of blood clots in the blood vessels, lungs and heart. It is also used to prevent clots for people with conditions that put them at an increased risk of developing blood clots. Blood clots are dangerous because they can cause medical problems such as heart attacks, stroke and pulmonary embolisms. Coumadin helps to reduce blood clotting within 24 hours of taking the medication, but the full effect may take 72 to 96 hours.

It is very important to take warfarin exactly as directed by your physician. Too much warfarin can cause bleeding, and not enough warfarin can allow dangerous blood clots to form.

- Warfarin should be taken at about the same time every day, preferably in the evening.
- Never skip a pill and never double up on pills if you have missed a dose. Notify your physician if you have missed any pills.
- Notify all your physicians, your dentist, and pharmacists that you are taking warfarin. You may want to wear a Medic Alert bracelet.
- Never take any medication, including over the counter (nonprescription) medications without informing your doctor.
- You will need to have your blood tested regularly, because the correct dose of warfarin for you can change over time. The most common blood test is known as the PT/INR. Your physician will inform you when these tests need to be done.
- Pregnancy requires special restrictions and management of warfarin. Warfarin must not be used between the 6th and 12th weeks of pregnancy. Notify your physician immediately if you become pregnant while on warfarin.

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- Do not give this medication to anyone else, even if they have the same symptoms as you do or take the same medication. It can be harmful for people to take this medication if their doctor has not prescribed it, as they may need a different dose.
- Do not stop taking this medication without consulting your doctor.

What is a Coumadin Clinic?

This clinic is to help patients to coordinate and optimize the anticoagulation medication Coumadin (Warfarin). We will do this by:

- Providing immediate PT/INR results
- Managing anticoagulation dosage during the same visit
- Providing systematic monitoring and patient evaluation
- Providing ongoing education
- Communicating with other providers involved in the patient's care

The patient will be evaluated by our Medical Assistant or Cardiovascular Technician, supervised by a physician, and then begin with a finger stick. They receive their results immediately during the consultation with the technician. Any adjustments to the medication dosage will be made immediately and the patient will go home. Each patient who enters our program receives one on one patient education and care during their appointment. A typical appointment will last approximately 15-20 minutes and includes registration and making a follow up appointment.

How should I use this medication?

Your doctor will recommend regular laboratory tests to determine how quickly your blood clots. Your daily Coumadin dosage will depend on this testing. It is very important to keep your lab appointments, as there is a narrow margin between too much and too little of the medication. Too much medication can cause you to bleed more. Too little medication may let a harmful blood clot form. Different circumstances in your life such as, eating certain foods, or using certain medications, can cause the medication to work more or less effectively.

It is very important that you take Coumadin exactly as prescribed by your doctor and through the Coumadin Clinic. If you miss a dose, take the dose as soon as possible on the same day, but do not double the dose of Coumadin the next day to make up for a missed dose. Do not start, stop, or change any medication except on the advice of your health care provider.

Store the medication at room temperature, protect it from light and moisture and keep it out of the reach of children.

It is strongly suggested that you wear a "Medical Alert Bracelet" at all times to alert all healthcare workers that you are currently taking Coumadin.

Use a "soft" toothbrush and gently brush your teeth.

Here are some tips to manage your lifestyle and habits appropriately when taking Coumadin:

- Do not make drastic changes to your diet, such as eating large amounts of green, leafy vegetables.

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- Do not attempt to change your weight by dieting without first checking with your healthcare provider
- Avoid alcohol
- Do not participate in any activity or sport that may result in a serious injury
- Avoid cutting yourself

Since caffeine, alcohol, nicotine from cigarettes or street drugs can affect the action of many medications, you should let your doctor and Coumadin Clinic MA know if you use them.

Prior to a medical/dental procedures, notify the healthcare providers that you are taking Coumadin. In some instances you will need to stop Coumadin for a few days. Only your healthcare provider can make this decision. Following a medical/dental procedure, you will be monitored until anticoagulation therapy is stable.

What side effects are possible with this medication?

A side effect is an unwanted response to a medication when it is taken in normal doses. A side effect may be mild or severe, temporary or permanent, but does not occur in everyone. Not everyone will experience side effects, and which side effect a person experiences cannot be anticipated.

The primary side effect of Coumadin is excessive bleeding. Notify your physician if you develop:

- red, dark, or cloudy urine
- bloody stools or black, tarry stools
- bleeding from gums or nose
- unexpected bruising
- excessive bleeding from minor cuts (bleeding doesn't stop after 10 to 15 minutes)
- excessive menstrual bleeding
- vomiting blood or "coffee ground" like material
- coughing up blood
- visual changes or loss of vision
- weakness or loss of sensation

What should you watch out for while taking this medication?

Abnormal bleeding: The most serious risk associated with Coumadin in any tissue or organ. The risk of bleeding is related to the intensity and duration of the treatment. It is extremely important to have regular blood tests to ensure the correct level of blood thinning is occurring. People with an added risk of bleeding, such as nosebleeds, vomiting blood or material that looks like coffee grounds, blood in the stool, or black tarry stools, or blood in the urine, get medical attention quickly.

NSAIDs/Anti-inflammatories: These medications can cause stomach ulcers and bleeding. It is recommended that anyone taking nonsteroidal anti-inflammatories (NSAIDs) such as ASA (acetylsalicylic) or IBU (Ibuprofen, advil or motrin) should be closely monitored to ensure no change in Coumadin dosage is required.

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The following symptoms may indicate that you are having a very serious side effect to a medication. They will not necessarily occur with your specific medication. However if you do experience any of these symptoms while taking any medication, seek immediate medical treatment.

- Allergic reactions: puffy swollen eyelids, lips, tongue, throat, hands, or feet. Hives, shortness of breath. A severe skin rash with peeling and blistering
- Changes in vision
- Chest pain
- Convulsions (seizures)
- High fever
- Irregular breathing with chest tightness or shortness of breath
- Irregular, rapid or slow heartbeat

Stroke: symptoms include a sudden severe headache, loss of coordination, confusion, difficulty speaking or understanding speech, sudden vision problems in one or both eyes, or sudden weakness or numbness, especially on one side of the body.

- Unusual or unexplained bleeding
- Unexplained muscle pain or weakness
- Tell your doctor if you have:
- Kidney or liver disease
- A recent injury, surgery or medical emergency
- High blood pressure
- Severe or uncontrolled diabetes
- Polycythemia vera, or celiac sprue
- Congestive heart failure
- Overactive thyroid
- A seizure disorder for which you take an anticonvulsant such as Phenytoin (Dilantin) or Phenobarbital (Luminal)
- A connective tissue disorder such as Marfan syndrome, Sjogren syndrome, scleroderma, Rheumatoid arthritis, or Lupus
- Are breast feeding, as Coumadin may pass into breast milk

Medications Some medications can interact and/or interfere with warfarin causing serious side effects. You should avoid:

- Aspirin or any aspirin-containing products (acetylsalicylic acid). Many cold remedies contain aspirin.
- Vitamin K, Vitamin C, Vitamin E, or other high potency vitamins
- laxatives such as mineral oil or Ex Lax
- antacids such as Maalox, Mylanta, or Gelusil with or just before taking warfarin

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You can use:

- Low dose acetaminophen (Tylenol). Note: The amount of acetaminophen should be as low as possible and monitored carefully. High doses of acetaminophen can prolong the INR.
- Milk of Magnesia or Colace
- A general multivitamin that does not contain more than 100% RDA of various components and does not contain Vitamin K

Medications that could interact with Coumadin:

- Acetaminophen/Tylenol
- Alcohol
- Allopurinol/Colchicine
- Aminosalicyclic acid
- Amiodarone
- Aminoglutethimide
- Anti-cancer medications: Carboplatin Cyclophosphamide Fluorouracil
- Acetylsalicylic Acid/ASA
- Azithromycin
- “Azole” Antifungals”Fluconazole Ketoconazole Miconazole
- Barbiturates: Phenobarbital some diet pills
- Carbamazepine/Carbatrol/Tegretol
- Cephalosporins/Cefazolin/Defoperazone/Cefotetan/Cefoxitin
- Celecoxib/Celebrex
- Chloral Hydrate
- Chloramphenicol/Boric Acid
- Chlorpropamide/Diabinese
- Cholestyramine
- Cimetidine/Tagamet
- Cisapride
- Clarithromycin/Biaxin
- Clofibrate
- Danazol
- Dextran
- Dicumarol
- Diflusal/Dolobid
- Disulfiram/Antabuse
- Erythromycin
- Ethacrynic Acid
- Estrogen containing medications
- Fenofibrate/Antara/Lipofen/Tricor/Triglide

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- Fenoprofen
- Floxetine
- Fluoxymesterone
- Flutamide
- Fluvoxamine
- Gemfibrozil
- Glucagon
- Griseofulvin
- Halothane
- Heparin
- Levamisole
- Methimazole
- Methyldopa
- Methyl Salicylate
- Methylphenidate
- Metronidazole
- Nalidixic Acid
- Neomycin
- Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medications: (NSAIDS) IBU Motrin Naprason Diclofenac
- Omeprazole
- Paroxetine
- Pencillins: Ampicillin Penicillin G Piperacillin Ticarcillin
- Pentoxifylline
- Phenylbutazone
- Phenytoin
- Prednisone: Solu Medrol Depo Medrol
- Propafenone
- Propoxphene/Darvacet/Darvacet N-100/Darvon
- Propradolol
- Propylthiouracil
- Quinidine
- Quinine
- Quinolone Antibiotics: Ciprofloxacin Norfloxacin Ofloxacin

Herbal botanical products that can interact with Coumadin:

- Bromelains
- Coenzyme Q10
- Danshen
- Dong Quai

- Garlic
- Ginko Biloba
- Ginseng
- St John's Wort

Common Aspirin-Containing Products

You should avoid the use of aspirin containing products. Always read label and any items with these ingredients should be avoided- aspirin, salicylate, acetylsalicylic acid, or ASA. The following is a list of common products containing aspirin:

- Alka-Seltzer
- Anacin
- Ascriptin
- Aspergum
- Bromo-Seltzer
- Bufferin
- Congespirin
- Coricidin
- Darvon Compound
- Dristan
- Empirin
- Excedrin
- Fiorinal
- Fizrin
- Midol
- Nytol
- Pepto-Bismol
- Percodan
- Sominex
- Vanquish

Who should NOT take this medication?

- Anyone with an allergy to any of the ingredients of the medication
- If you are pregnant
- Have bleeding tendencies or blood disorders
- Senility, alcoholism, or psychosis, or other conditions where the person may not be able to cooperate with taking the medication and having the necessary lab test on a regular basis.
- Has recently had or is planning to have surgery of the central nervous system or the eye or surgery associated with trauma resulting in large open surfaces
- Is undergoing certain types of anesthesia
- Has malignant hypertension

Diet

Coumadin works by partially blocking the reuse of vitamin K in your liver. Vitamin K is needed to make chemicals that help the blood to clot and prevent bleeding. Vitamin K is found naturally in foods such as leafy green vegetables. If you are taking Coumadin you may continue to eat these foods. Do not make any drastic changes to your diet. High Vitamin K foods include:

- cauliflower
- scallions (green onions)
- peas
- garbanzo beans (chick peas)
- asparagus
- green/herbal teas, coffee
- liverwurst, beef liver
- soybean and canola oil
- spinach
- kale
- turnip greens, collard greens, mustard greens
- broccoli
- cabbage
- lettuce, parsley, watercress and endive
- brussel sprouts
- avocado
- coleslaw
- endive
- lentils
- lettuce
- sauerkraut
- swiss chard
- canola oil, soybean oil and mayonnaise- keep the amount you use steady
- green tea, teas with sweet woodruff, sweet clover, or tonka beans- keep amount you use steady

You may eat these foods, but try to eat about the same amount of them each week. Limit your alcohol intake to one or two drinks only per day.