Your Guide to Coumadin®/Warfarin Therapy
5 Things You MUST Know About Coumadin® (Generic Name– Warfarin)

1. You must have your blood checked regularly to prevent clots and bleeding.

2. Many medicines interact with Coumadin®/Warfarin, so always call your doctor when your medicines change.

3. Green vegetables can affect your Coumadin®/Warfarin, but don't stop eating them. Just eat the same amount every week.

4. Anytime you see unusual bleeding or bruising, call the clinic or go to the ER.

5. If you miss a dose, take the missed dose as soon as possible on the same day. Do NOT take a double dose the next day to make up for the missed dose.
Introduction

You have started taking Coumadin®/Warfarin. Patients who are on Coumadin®/Warfarin must be watched closely. Initially, you will need to have blood drawn often. Your doctor will work with you to keep you healthy and safe while you are taking Coumadin®/Warfarin. If you have questions, call your doctor.

Your doctor’s phone number is:

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How does it work?

If your blood is too thick it can form clots and put you at risk for serious health problems like a heart attack or stroke. Coumadin®/Warfarin is a medicine that will keep your blood from clotting and helps it flow easier. Sometimes this drug is called a blood thinner.
Blood Testing

To make sure your Coumadin®/Warfarin is working, you have to get a blood test called an INR. Sometimes this blood test may be referred to as a PT or protime. This test is usually a fingerstick test, but some doctors’ offices will draw a tube of blood. This blood test measures how fast your blood is clotting. If your blood test is too high, you might be at risk for bleeding. If it is too low, you might be at risk for forming clots. When you first start taking Coumadin®/Warfarin, you may have your blood checked often. Once the blood test is in the target range, this test is done less often.

My INR blood test range is:

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How do I take it?

The amount of Coumadin®/Warfarin each person needs is different. The dose is based on the INR blood test. The amount of medication you take may change based on the blood test.

- Take your Coumadin®/Warfarin exactly the way you are told at the same time every day.
- If you miss a dose, take it if you remember it later that day. If you don’t remember it until the next day, call your doctor for instructions. If you can’t reach your doctor, skip it.
- Never take a double dose
- Check your tablet color before leaving the pharmacy
- If your tablet looks different, talk to your pharmacist. The shape and color should never change unless your doctor tells you he/she is changing it.
Use of Other Medications

- Other medicines can change the way Coumadin®/Warfarin works. This includes prescription medicines, over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal products.

- It is very important to talk to your doctor about all the other medicines you are taking.

- Any product containing aspirin or medicines similar to aspirin may be harmful when taking Coumadin®/Warfarin. Below is a list of common medications that should be approved by your doctor.

**Pain relievers, such as:**
- Excedrin®
- Naproxen (Aleve®)
- Ibuprofen (Advil®, Motrin®, Nuprin®, Midol®, Pamprin HB®)

**Stomach remedies, such as:**
- Cimetidine (Tagamet HB®)
- Bismuth Subsalicylate (Pepto Bismol®)
- Laxatives and stool softeners
- Alka-Seltzer®

**Herbal products, such as:**
- Garlic
- Green tea
- Ginkgo

Nutritional Supplements, such as:
- Ensure®, Boost®
Possible Side Effects

Side effects are possible with any medicine including Coumadin®/Warfarin. Most side effects with Coumadin®/Warfarin relate to how this medicine works. Since it prevents blood from clotting, it may cause bleeding. To reduce your risk of bleeding it is important to monitor your blood Coumadin®/Warfarin level so that it is in the right range for you.

Slight bleeding – you may notice this from time to time:
- Gum bleeding while brushing your teeth
- Occasional nosebleed
- Menstrual bleeding that is a little bit heavier than normal
- Easy bruising
- Bleeding after a cut that takes a little longer to stop than usual

Major bleeding – call your doctor or go to the emergency room right away if you have any of the following:
- Red, dark, or coffee colored urine or bowel movements
- Coughing or vomiting bright red blood
- Severe headache or stomachache
- A cut that will not stop bleeding within 10 minutes
- A serious fall or hit to the head
- Dizziness or weakness
Alcohol and Coumadin®/Warfarin

Alcohol can affect the way Coumadin®/Warfarin works for you but it does not mean you cannot drink alcohol.

- Do not drink more than 2 alcoholic drinks per week.
- Do not change the amount you normally drink each week as it may increase your risk of bleeding or clotting.

Diet and Coumadin®/Warfarin

Vitamin K helps your blood form clots. Vitamin K is found in green leafy vegetables. Since Coumadin®/Warfarin works to keep your blood from clotting, high amounts of vitamin K can work against your Coumadin®/Warfarin. Changing the amount of vitamin K you eat each week may change how your Coumadin®/Warfarin works for you. It is important to keep your diet the same from week to week. Do not change your vitamin K intake. Some examples of foods high in vitamin K are listed on the next page.

Call your doctor if you have stomach problems, vomiting or diarrhea for more than 1 day as this could affect your Coumadin.
Foods high in vitamin K

Vegetables, such as:
- Broccoli
- Cabbage
- Brussels sprouts
- Green peas
- Asparagus
- Avocado

Leafy greens, such as:
- Lettuce
- Spinach
- Kale
- Turnip, collard, and mustard greens

Meats, such as:
- Beef liver
- Pork liver

Other foods:
- Mayonnaise
- Margarine
- Canola, soybean, or olive oil

Beverages:
- Green tea
Staying Active

Exercise is important to your health. Think about the sports and activities you like doing. Do they put you at risk of injury? If so, try another activity and use protective gear to keep safe. For example, if you like to ride a bike, be sure to wear a helmet and gloves. If you would like to start a new activity that will increase the amount of exercise you get, talk to your doctor. **Call your doctor or go to the hospital immediately if you have a bad fall, even if you are not bleeding.**
Staying safe on Coumadin®/Warfarin

Indoor Safety Tips:

- Be careful using knives and scissors
- Use an electric razor
- Use a soft toothbrush
- Use waxed dental floss
- Wear shoes or non-skid slippers in the house
- Do not trim corns or calluses yourself
- Be careful trimming your nails

Outdoor Safety Tips:

- Always wear shoes
- Be careful when using sharp tools
- Avoid activities and sports that can easily hurt you
- Wear gardening gloves when doing yard work
- Stay active
Information in this handout was adapted from the original work by Carla Huber, ARNP, MS and the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) “Your Guide to Coumadin®/Warfarin Therapy”

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