

A Guide to Taking Warfarin

(Brand names: Coumadin® or Jantoven®)





Your Information

This book belongs to:

Why do I need to take warfarin?

Your doctor wants you to take warfarin for:

Medical Condition

Your INR Target Range is _____ to _____

The date of your next INR blood test is:

Your next blood test will be done by:

Testing Facility

Visiting Nurse Association

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 or your warfarin manager.

Your Warfarin Manager

Your warfarin manager is:

Phone number:

**It is very
IMPORTANT
to keep all of
your doctor and
INR blood test
appointments!**

**If you must miss
an appointment,
call and
reschedule right
away!**

**Warfarin
pills come in
different sizes
and shapes.**

**Always be
sure that you
are taking the
correct amount
of warfarin!**

**If you have
any questions
or problems
with your
warfarin, call
your doctor
or warfarin
manager right
away!**



What You Need to Know

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



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

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.

Never change from one brand to the other unless you are told to do so by your doctor or warfarin manager!

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

Patients taking warfarin need to be monitored closely. A warfarin manager can help with this. A warfarin manager may be a doctor, nurse, pharmacist, physician assistant, or a warfarin clinic.



What to Tell Your Doctor or Warfarin Manager

Tell your doctor or warfarin manager if you:

- ❖ Fall often
- ❖ Drink alcohol, including 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. These 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 to have is called **P**rothrombin **T**ime or 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**. The INR is a universal way to report the results of your blood test. This means that every laboratory doing INR blood tests reports the results the same way.

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 do so!

What is an INR target range?

An INR target range is the INR blood test result that your warfarin manager wants for you. 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 the inside front cover of this book.

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

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

- Make sure your warfarin manager has all 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 get a new appointment.
- Try to have your INR blood test at the same lab each time. If you go to a different lab, call your warfarin manager on the day you go for your test. Your warfarin manager will then know where to look for your test results.
- If possible, schedule your blood test early in the day. This may help your warfarin manager get the results 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. The INR blood test results help your warfarin manager decide what dose of warfarin is right for you. After each 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 do so. Take it at the same time every day. Most people take their warfarin 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 strength of warfarin has a different pill color. Your pills may be round or oval. If your pills change shape or color, call you 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 normal
- ❖ Nosebleeds
- ❖ Allergic reaction such as hives or itching

These side effects are also possible but are rare:

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



Taking Warfarin

Danger Signs

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

- ☞ Chest pain or discomfort in the arms, back, neck, or jaw
- ☞ Trouble breathing
- ☞ Slurred speech
- ☞ 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

**ALWAYS CALL 911
FOR EMERGENCIES**



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. It is important to tell your doctor or warfarin manager about any changes you have including:

- If anyone has told you to stop your warfarin including a dentist, a doctor, or a surgeon
- If you have had any serious falls or injuries, especially to your head
- If you develop any new health problems or have any visits to the hospital
- If you are sick 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 planning to travel for more than 2 weeks or planning travel that will cause you to miss an INR test
- If you are pregnant, thinking about becoming pregnant, or breastfeeding



Tips for Traveling

- Carry your medicine 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

Medicines and Supplements

Always tell anyone giving you ANY new prescription that you are taking warfarin! Always check with your warfarin manager before taking any over-the-counter medicines or nutritional supplements. Many medicines and supplements interact with warfarin. Here are some examples:

Prescription Medicines

- Amiodarone
- Chemotherapy
- Antibiotics (all types)
- Clopidogrel (Plavix[®])

Over-the-Counter Medicines

- Acetaminophen (Tylenol[®])
- Ibuprofen (Motrin[®], Advil[®], Nuprin[®])
- Ranitidine (Zantac[®])
- Aspirin
- Naproxen (Aleve[®])
- Cimetidine (Tagamet[®])

Multivitamin Supplements

- Multivitamins with more than 25 mcg of Vitamin K

Nutritional Supplements and Herbal Remedies

- All vitamin K supplements
- Boost[®]
- Fish Oil
- Co-enzyme Q-10
- Ensure[®]
- Ginkgo
- 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.



Important Facts

You can eat foods with vitamin K while you are on warfarin, but you should eat about the same amount of vitamin K each day. Pay attention to portion size and serving size to know how much vitamin K you are eating.

- Vitamin K is measured in micrograms. Microgram is abbreviated as mcg.
- Foods with less than 25 mcg of vitamin K do not need to be counted.



Remember!

Eat about the same amount of vitamin K each day.

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

Vitamin K Content of Foods

Listed in alphabetical order in each group

VERY HIGH (more than 500 mcg/serving)	Serving	mcg/Serving
Beet greens, cooked	1 cup	697
Brussels sprouts, frozen, cooked	1 cup	300
Collards, frozen, cooked	1 cup	1059
Dandelion greens, cooked	1 cup	579
Kale, cooked	1 cup	1062
Mustard greens, cooked	1 cup	419
Spinach, frozen, cooked	1 cup	1027
Turnip greens, cooked	1 cup	529
HIGH (200-250 mcg in each serving)	Serving	mcg/Serving
Broccoli, cooked	1 cup	220
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



Helpful References and Web Links

- ❖ *Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality: Your Guide to Taking Coumadin®/Warfarin Therapy*
www.ahrq.gov/consumer/coumadin.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
- ❖ *National Institutes of Health*
www.ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/cc/coumadin1.pdf
- ❖ *Point-of-Care Self-Testing Devices for Patients*
www.hemosense.com/patient/pst.shtml
www.poc.roche.com/coaguchek/home.do
www.itcmed.com

Please Help Us

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

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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 to do so.
- ❖ 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 such as 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 or purchase a warfarin ID bracelet.