

Health Facts *for you*

Warfarin (Coumadin[®], Jantoven[®])

Your Information

Your doctor wants you to take warfarin for

Your INR target range

Your warfarin manager is

Name

Phone number

Table of contents

What is warfarin?	2
Interactions with other medicines	4
What lifestyle changes could affect my INR?	5
How Diet Affects Warfarin.....	6
Take Home Points.....	8
Vitamin K Content in Food.....	9
Warfarin Quiz	11
Warfarin Emergency Pocket Card	13

Web Based Resources

UW Health - Anticoagulation Services

<http://www.uwhealth.org/anticoagulation>

Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality

<http://www.ahrq.gov/consumer/coumadin.htm>

Quality Assured Services, Inc. – Vitamin K Registry

<http://www.ptinr.com>

Coumadin Website:

<http://www.coumadin.com>

What is warfarin?

Warfarin sodium (Coumadin[®], Jantoven[®]) is a drug that is often referred to as a “blood thinner.” It works to prevent the production of clotting factors. This causes the blood to take longer to form a clot and can also prevent a clot from getting bigger.

Why do I need a blood thinner?

It may be used to prevent a clot from forming or it can be used to treat an existing clot. Some risk factors for blood clots are listed below.

- Stroke
- Atrial Fibrillation
- Heart Failure
- Heart Valve Replacement
- Treatment or prevention of DVT (deep vein thrombosis)
- Treatment or prevention of PE (pulmonary embolism)

What dose should I take?

There is no standard dose. The amount needed varies for each person. The dose is changed based on a blood test called the INR. It is a test to measure how long it takes for your blood to clot.

How can I tell what dose I am taking?

Both generic (warfarin) and brand (Coumadin[®], Jantoven[®]) will use the same color theme, but tablets may be different shapes and sizes.

Dose	Color
1 mg	Pink
2 mg	Purple
2.5 mg	Light Green
3 mg	Brown
4 mg	Blue

Dose	Color
5 mg	Peach
6 mg	Dark Green
7.5 mg	Yellow
10 mg	White

What is my target INR range?

Your target INR range depends on why you are taking warfarin. Most people on blood thinners will have a target INR range of 2.0 to 3.0 or 2.5 to 3.5. Your doctor will tell you your INR range.

How often will my INR be checked?

You will need to be tested 2 – 3 times per week when you first start. Once your INR and dose become more constant you may be able to test less often, about once per month. Your warfarin manager will tell you how often to have your blood tested.

When should I take my warfarin?

Warfarin should be taken once a day. Take your dose exactly as prescribed and at the same time every day. Most people are told to take their dose in the evening.

What happens if I miss a dose?

If you miss a dose and remember within 12 hours, you may take your dose. If it has been more than 12 hours **do NOT** take your missed dose. Take your scheduled dose for the current day and call your clinic. Be sure to report the missed dose to your warfarin manager.

Never double up on your dose to make up for a missed dose. Never change your dose unless your warfarin manager has told you to do so.

Side effects

Bleeding is the most common side effect. Minor bleeding can occur even if your INR is within your target range.

Minor Bleeding

- Bleeding gums during tooth brushing
- Bruising more than usual
- Occasional nose bleeds
- Prolonged menstrual bleeding (heavier than normal)
- Prolonged bleeding after minor cuts

You may notice these side effects at times. If you have any question about whether your bleeding is a concern, call your warfarin manager.

Major Bleeding

- Any bleeding that lasts for more than 10 minutes
- Coughing up blood
- Frequent nose bleeds, bleeding gums, or unusual bleeding
- Red or dark brown urine
- Red, black, or tarry stool
- Severe headache or stomach ache
- Unexplained bruising
- Vomiting blood

If you have a serious fall, hit your head, or if you are having any of these major bleeding side effects **call your doctor or go to the ER right away.**

Interactions with other medicines

Prescription drugs, over-the-counter products, herbal products and supplements can affect how your blood thinner works. Any time you start or stop a new medicine, herb, or vitamin you must tell your warfarin manager. Listed below are some of the medicines that can interact.

- Amiodarone
- Antibiotics (all types)
- Antifungals
- Aspirin
- Clopidogrel (Plavix[®])
- Ibuprofen (Motrin[®], Advil[®])
- Naproxen (Aleve[®])

This is **NOT** a complete list. To help prevent interactions, you must let your doctors and pharmacists know you are taking warfarin. Also, try to fill all your drugs at the same pharmacy. This can help screen for interactions.

What lifestyle changes could affect my INR?

Exercise/Sports

A change in activity level can affect your INR. Tell your warfarin manager if you either increase or decrease your activity level. You should also avoid activities that may place you at risk for injury, such as contact sports. Do not play contact sports without talking to your doctor first. You may engage in low risk physical activities, such as walking, jogging, or swimming.

Travel

If you are planning to travel tell your warfarin manager before your trip. You may need to make plans for INR checks. You should also carry your medicines with you at all times. Luggage may get lost and drugs left in cars may degrade in extreme heat or cold.

Sickness

Acute illness can change your response to warfarin. Tell your doctor or clinic if you have any of the symptoms listed below.

- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Severe flu-like symptoms
- Started on an antibiotic

****Any of the above may cause an increase in INR and increase your risk of bleeding****

Alcohol

Limit alcohol to no more than 1 drink per day, or no more than 1 to 2 drinks on a special occasion. Drinking more can greatly increase your risk for bleeding. You should tell your warfarin manager about any amount of alcohol you consume.

Surgical, Dental, or other Medical procedures

Tell all members of your health care team (surgeons, dentist, etc.) that you are taking a blood thinner. You may need to stop taking it before certain procedures. Be sure to tell your warfarin manager if you were told to stop or hold your warfarin. They may need to change you to another type of blood thinner before your procedure.

If you are placed on a type of blood thinner that you inject, often called “bridging,” keep taking this until your warfarin manager tells you to stop.

Pregnancy

If you think you are or may become pregnant, tell your doctor right away. Taking it while you are pregnant may cause harm to your unborn baby. You should use a form of birth control. If you become pregnant your doctor will instruct you about other treatment options.

Medical Alert Information

In case of an emergency or accident you will want to wear a medical alert bracelet or necklace or carry an identification card. This will alert the health care team that you are taking a blood thinner. Ask your local pharmacy or doctor how you can obtain these.

How Diet Affects Warfarin

Some foods and other items you take can change the way your warfarin works including

- Foods that contain Vitamin K (see table below)
- Some Herbal and Over-the-Counter products
- Cranberry juice

Vitamin K

Vitamin K is common to many foods, such as green leafy vegetables. They can reduce the effects of warfarin when eaten in large amounts. If you eat foods high in Vitamin K it is important to eat the same amount of these foods from week to

week. You can do this by knowing how often per week and how many servings you eat of food high in vitamin K.

Foods high in Vitamin K (serving size ½ cup cooked or 1 cup raw) If these foods are a part of your diet, continue eating the same amounts	
Kale	Cabbage
Spinach	Broccoli
Collards	Watercress
Swiss chard	Endive lettuce
Brussels sprouts	Romaine lettuce
Parsley (<i>okay as a garnish</i>)	Green leaf lettuce
Turnip and Mustard Greens	Soy Beans/Edamame

Other vegetables, fruits, cereals, dairy products, eggs, and meat contain smaller amounts.

Remember

- Eat the same amounts of Vitamin K foods from week to week.
- *Note:* usual serving size ½ cup cooked or 1 cup raw

Herbal and Over the Counter (OTC) products

The most common **herbs** known to interfere with the action of warfarin are listed below.

Increase bleed risk	Increase clot risk
Echinacea	Ginseng
Garlic (<i>capsules</i>)	St. John's Wort
Ginger (<i>capsules</i>)	Coenzyme Q10
Ginkgo Biloba	
Vitamin E	

Multivitamins may contain Vitamin K and Vitamin E. If you take a multivitamin, take your dose every day.

Talk with your doctor or pharmacist if you take these or any other herbal products and before starting or stopping any herbal or over-the-counter product.

Cranberry Juice

Cranberry juice might increase your bleed risk. Do not drink more than 1 cup per day.

If you plan on changing your diet either short or long term let your warfarin manager know. They may need to watch your INR more closely.

Take Home Points

- Take your warfarin exactly as prescribed.
- Never double up on a dose if missed.
- Tell all of your health care team that you are taking a blood thinner.
- Know the signs and symptoms of bleeding and report them right away.
- Tell your warfarin manager if there are any changes in your medicines, diet, or activity level.
- Tell your warfarin manager if you were told to hold or stop warfarin before a procedure.
- Keep all scheduled visits or call promptly to reschedule.

Vitamin K Content in Food

Food	Serving Size	Vitamin K content (in mcgs)
Fats and Dressings		
Margarine	1 Tbsp	M (10)
Mayonnaise	1 Tbsp	M (5)
Soybean, canola, and salad oils	1 Tbsp	M (20)
Olive oil	1 Tbsp	M (10)
Fruits		
Blueberries	1 cup	M (25)
Grapes	1 cup	M (20)
Vegetables		
Asparagus	5 spears	M (40)
Avocado	1 small	M (30)
Broccoli	1 cup	H (220)
Brussels sprouts	5 sprouts	H (200)
Cabbage	1 cup	M (40)
Cabbage, red	1 cup	M (30)
Collard greens	1 cup	H (840)
Endive (raw)	1 cup	H (115)
Green Beans	1 cup	M (15)
Green scallion (raw)	1 cup	H (200)
Kale leaf (raw)	1 cup	H (550)
Lettuce, bib, red leaf, romaine (raw)	1 cup	H (65)
Lettuce, iceberg (raw)	2 cups	M (30)
Mustard greens (raw)	1 cup	H (280)
Parsley	1/4 cup	H (245)
Peas, green (cooked)	2/3 cup	M (40)
Soybeans	1 cup	H (90)
Swiss chard	1 cup	H (300)
Spinach leaf (raw)	1cup	H (145)
Spinach (cooked)	1 cup	H (900)
Turnip greens (raw)	1 cup	H (140)
Watercress (raw)	1 cup	H (85)
Condiments		
Dill pickle	1 cup	M (25)
Other		
Cashews	1 cup	M (45)

M = Medium H = High

For more information www.ptinr.com – vitamin K registry

Patient Dosing Sheet for Warfarin

Warfarin Indication _____ Goal INR _____

Start date _____ Stop Date _____ Tablet Strength _____ mg

Fill in INR from each lab draw date. Add dose in mg for each day of the week. Make any changes to sheet as needed. Example provided								
Lab Draw	INR	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
1/1	2.0	5 mg	3 mg	5 mg	3 mg	5 mg	3 mg	5 mg

Tell your warfarin manager of

- Change in diet
- Change in medicines
- Missed or extra doses
- Unusual bruising or bleeding
- Upcoming procedures or trips

Warfarin Quiz

Select the best answer for each question.

1. What is the name of the blood test used to monitor warfarin levels?
 - a. INR
 - b. Platelet count
 - c. Red blood cell count
2. How often do you need a blood test?
 - a. Once a year
 - b. At regular intervals, decided on by my doctor or clinic
 - c. Only after a dose changes
3. If your INR is high, you may be at risk for:
 - a. Clotting
 - b. Serious bleeding
 - c. Heart attack
4. What should you do if you miss a dose of warfarin?
 - a. Take my dose as soon as I remember on the same day. If it is the next day, I will just resume my normal dosing and tell my healthcare provider.
 - b. Nothing- it is okay to skip one dose
 - c. Take an extra pill to "catch up"
5. What should you do if you want to take an over-the-counter medicine or supplement?
 - a. I can't take any over-the-counter medicines or vitamins while on warfarin
 - b. Go ahead and start the new medicines, your provider does not need to know.
 - c. Call my provider and ask if the new item will be safe with warfarin.
6. What should you do if you really enjoy eating spinach or other green, leafy vegetables?
 - a. Stop eating them altogether
 - b. Only eat them if INR is high
 - c. Be constant with the amount that I eat
 - d. Just eat 1 big bowl per month
7. Who should you tell that you take warfarin?
 - a. All my doctors
 - b. My dentist
 - c. My pharmacist
 - d. All of the above

Quiz Answers

1. A
2. B
3. B
4. A
5. C
6. C
7. D

References:

1. Ansell J, et al. American College of Chest Physicians. Pharmacology and management of the vitamin K antagonists: American College of Chest Physicians Evidence-Based Clinical Practice Guidelines (8th Edition). *Chest*. 2008; 133(6 suppl):160S-198S.
2. Holbrook AM, et al. Systematic overview of warfarin and its drug and food interactions. *Arch Intern Med*. 2005; 165:1095-1106.
3. Wittkowsky AK. Drug interactions update: drug, herbs and oral anticoagulation. *J Thromb Thrombolysis*. 2001; 12:67-71.
4. Warfarin [package insert]. Princeton, NJ: Bristol-Meyers Squibb Pharma Company; revised Jan 2009.

Warfarin Emergency Pocket Card

Keep this card in your wallet or purse in case of emergencies. It allows emergency personnel to know that you are on warfarin.

I am using Warfarin, an anticoagulant.		
Please tell this immediately to anyone providing medical care to me.		
Name:		
Birth date:	Weight:	Blood Type:
On warfarin for:		
Medical Conditions:		
In an emergency, please notify:		
Name:		
Relationship:		
Address:		
Phone: ()		
Doctor's Name:		
Doctor's Phone: ()		

The Spanish version of this *Health Facts for You* is #7085.