

Warfarin (Jantoven[®])

What is Warfarin?

It is a medicine used to prevent clots from forming in your blood. It is a type of medicine known as an anticoagulant (blood thinner).

Warfarin works by making it harder for your blood to clot.

How Is It Given?

Warfarin is a tablet you swallow with water.

Your primary care provider will start you on a low dose and increase it or decrease it based on the results of a blood test called an INR.

It is important for you to keep all follow-up visits to check your INR level. Take your warfarin as directed. Do not stop taking it or change how much you take without talking to your primary care provider.

What To Watch For?

■ Personal care:

- You could bleed more easily from cuts or wounds while taking warfarin. Use caution around sharp objects. Use an electric razor. Be careful when working with knives and scissors.
- Wear slippers or shoes at all times, even while in the house.
- Trim your nails carefully. Trim them straight across with a nail clippers. Do not pick at the cuticle.

- Use a soft toothbrush. Gently brush and floss your teeth.
- Avoid activities that may increase your risk for injury, such as hunting and contact sports.
- Tell your dentist, doctors and other health care providers you take warfarin before planning any dental work or medical surgery or procedure.

■ Food and alcohol:

- Warfarin helps to slow down blood clotting but vitamin K helps blood to clot. **You do not need to avoid foods that are high in vitamin K, but it is important to eat consistent amounts.** Foods high in vitamin K are: broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, collard greens and endive.
- Cranberry products may affect the anticoagulant effects of warfarin. Talk with your doctor if you drink cranberry juice on a regular basis.
- Alcohol may change the effects of warfarin. Have no more than one alcoholic drink a day. One drink is:
 - 12 ounces beer
 - 4 ounces wine
 - 1 ounce hard liquor.

■ Other medicines:

- Do not use aspirin and products that contain aspirin or acetylsalicylic acid (another name for aspirin) without asking your primary care provider. Aspirin can increase the effects of warfarin or can irritate your stomach lining and cause bleeding.
- Avoid using nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory (NSAIDs) medicines, unless your primary care provider says it is OK. This includes ibuprofen (Advil[®], Motrin[®], Nuprin[®]) and naproxen (Aleve[®], Naprosyn[®]).
- You may use acetaminophen (Tylenol[®]) when needed.
- Herbal and other supplements may increase or decrease the effects of warfarin.
- High doses of vitamin E — received only through a supplement — have been shown to increase the risk of bleeding.
- Fish oil (omega-3 fatty acids) supplements may increase the effects of warfarin. This means they may slow blood clotting.

What Side Effects May Occur?

The most common side effect is bleeding. You may bleed or bruise more easily or for a longer time when taking warfarin. Side effects can include:

- minor nosebleeds
- bleeding from the gums when you brush your teeth
- bleeding from a minor cut that lasts less than 5 minutes
- increased bruising
- increased menstrual flow.

When To Call Your Primary Care Provider?

Call your primary care provider if you have signs of severe bleeding:

- heavy bruising
- dark stools
- blood in urine
- bleeding that does not stop.

For more information or for questions about this medicine, please ask your primary care provider or pharmacist.

What if Your Primary Care Provider Tells You to Stop Taking Warfarin?

If your primary care provider tells you to stop taking warfarin, you can expect its effects to last up to 5 days after you stop taking it. Keep following bleeding precautions during this time.