

Questions and Answers About Anticoagulation Therapy

What is Anticoagulant Therapy?

Medicine that is used to prevent unwanted blood clots from forming is known as an anticoagulant (or blood thinner).

Warfarin is prescribed if you:

- had a stroke
- had a blood clot in your legs or lungs
- have heart problems (such as abnormal heart rhythm, valve replacement or repair or artery blockages)
- had surgery.

Two brand names of warfarin are Coumadin[®] and Jantoven[®].

Why do You Need to Need Blood Tests so Often?

Once you start taking warfarin, you will need to have blood tests often to monitor your clotting time. This is done with a blood test called the INR (international normalized ratio) or CFX (chromogenic factor X).

You may need to have it checked more often when you first start taking warfarin, if your INR/CFX is not in the goal range, or if you have changes in your health, other medicines or diet.

You will need to have your INR/CFX checked at least every month. It is important that you make and keep all of your INR/CFX appointments.

When Should You Take Warfarin?

- Take warfarin as directed.
- Take your dose every day at the same time.
- If you miss a dose, take it as soon as you can. Do not add it to your next dose. Call your doctor, who may want to adjust your next dose.

If you have an INR/CFX test scheduled in the next few days, call your doctor or clinic to see if you should re-schedule.

- Do not stop taking warfarin without talking to your doctor.
- Do not take warfarin if you are pregnant, may become pregnant or if you are breastfeeding.

What are the Side Effects?

Side effects of warfarin include:

- nosebleeds
- bleeding from the gums when you brush your teeth
- bleeding from cuts or other breaks in your skin
- increased bruising
- increased menstrual flow
- blood in your stool or urine.

When Should You Call Your Doctor?

Call your doctor if you have:

- unusual, unexplained or large areas of bruising
- bruising often
- spitting or coughing up blood
- pink, red or dark brown urine
- red or tarry black stools
- bleeding from cuts or other breaks in your skin that continues after applying pressure to the area for 5 minutes
- nosebleeds that last longer than 5 minutes or that occur three or more times a week
- bleeding from your gums when brushing your teeth
- dizziness or weakness
- unusually heavy or long menstrual periods
- headaches that don't go away with medicine, rest or both
- swelling or pain anywhere.

Do You Need to Watch What You Eat?

There are many foods that can change how warfarin works in your body, especially those that have high amounts of vitamin K.

Warfarin slows down blood clotting and vitamin K helps blood to clot.

- High sources of vitamin K include:
 - broccoli
 - brussels sprouts
 - cabbage
 - collard greens
 - green onions
 - dark, leafy vegetables.
- **Limit these foods to small amounts if you do not normally eat them.**

- If you do normally eat these foods, **do not change the amount you eat.**
- Green tea has high levels of vitamin K. If you drink green tea, be consistent with how much you drink each day.
- One serving size is one-half to 1 cup.

Do You Need to Avoid Alcohol?

- Do not have more than one drink each day. Alcohol may change the effects of warfarin. One drink equals:
 - 4 ounces of wine
 - 12 ounces of beer
 - 1 ounce of hard liquor.

Do Other Medicines Interact With Warfarin?

Some medicines may interact with warfarin and cause side effects. Tell your doctor all the over-the-counter medicines, prescription medicines, herbals, vitamins and nutritional supplements you are taking. Avoid all medicines that contain aspirin, naproxen and ibuprofen.

Does Tobacco Affect Warfarin?

You should not use tobacco products while taking warfarin. Tobacco can affect your INR/CFX levels.

Are There Special Precautions You Need to Take?

- Use caution around sharp objects. You could bleed easily from cuts or wounds.
- Wear slippers or shoes at all times, even in the house.
- Trim your nails straight across with a nail clippers.
- Wear a helmet any time you are doing an activity that could lead to a head injury.