

# Warfarin (Coumadin, Jantoven)

Patient Guide



**SANFORD**<sup>®</sup>  
HEALTH



I am taking warfarin because: \_\_\_\_\_

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## My INR Range Goal

2.0 - 3.0

**Less than 2.0** • Too thick  
• May clot

**2.0 - 3.0** • Goal INR

**More than 3.0** • Too thin  
• May bleed

2.5 - 3.5

**Less than 2.5** • Too thick  
• May clot

**2.5 - 3.5** • Goal INR

**More than 3.5** • Too thin  
• May bleed

\_\_\_\_\_

**Less than \_\_\_\_\_** • Too thick  
• May clot

**\_\_\_\_\_** • Goal INR

**More than \_\_\_\_\_** • Too thin  
• May bleed

The clinic that manages my warfarin:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

## Warfarin Tablets



Always check the strength stamped on each tablet. Most warfarin pills are color-coded the same but some may be different. Tablets are scored so half tablets can be used.

You have been started on a drug to slow blood clotting. Blood clots can lead to serious health problems. Drugs that slow blood clotting are called anticoagulants (an-te-ko-AG-u-lants). **Anti** means against and **coagulant** means to thicken into a gel or solid. Warfarin is the most common anticoagulant. Coumadin and Jantoven are the most common brand names of warfarin.

## How Does Warfarin Work?

Warfarin is sometimes called a blood thinner. But, it does not thin the blood or dissolve blood clots. Warfarin blocks the proteins needed for blood to clot.

## Why Am I Taking Warfarin?

Your doctor may tell you to take warfarin if there is concern your blood may make dangerous clots. Warfarin can prevent:

- Blood clots in your legs and lungs
- Strokes and TIAs (mini strokes)
  - After having a heart valve replaced
  - If you have abnormal heart beats

## How Should I Take My Warfarin?

Take warfarin once a day with or without food. Take it around the same time each day. Taking it with your evening meal or at bedtime is best in case your dose needs to be changed based on your lab work. A pillbox may help you keep track of your pills.

What to do if you miss a dose:

- **If you miss a dose**, take it that day as soon as you remember.
- **If you do not remember until the next day**, do **not** take 2 doses of warfarin to catch up. Take your next dose at the normal time.
- **If you miss two or more doses**, call the clinic that manages your warfarin.

**Do not** stop the medication or change the dose on your own. Call the clinic and talk with your healthcare team before making any changes.

# How Often Will My Warfarin Dose Change?

A blood test is used to decide the best dose for you. It is called the International Normalized Ratio (INR). This test measures how long it takes your blood to clot. Your dose may be changed based on your INR results. You may eat and drink before this test.

At first, your INR may be tested a few times a week. When the right dose is found, your blood may only need to be tested every 4 to 6 weeks. Your INR can be changed by many things. Talk to the clinic that manages your warfarin if you have any changes in:

- What you eat
- Activity
- Health
- Other medicines you take (herbal supplements, over-the-counter medicines, prescription drugs)

When your dose is changed, be sure you know what to do. If not, ask.

- **Always** write down changes in your dosing calendar.
- **Never** change your own warfarin dose.

You should be called with your INR results in one business day of having your blood test. If you have not heard from us in one business day, call the clinic that manages your warfarin.

## What About Other Medicines?

Some medicines could be harmful if taken while you are on warfarin.

- Tell all of your doctors, pharmacists, dentists, or other health care workers that you are taking warfarin.
- Ask the clinic that manages your warfarin before taking any new medicine, even over-the-counter medicines or herbal products.

Unless your doctor tells you to, do not take medicines that have:

- Aspirin
- Acetylsalicylic acid
- Salicylic acid
- Ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil, Nuprin, and others)
- Ketoprofen (Orudis KT)
- Naproxen (Aleve)
- Cimetidine (Tagamet HB)

You may take acetaminophen (Tylenol) in low doses. Talk with the clinic that manages your warfarin about any vitamins or food supplements that may have vitamin K.

Many antibiotics can affect how you react to warfarin. If you are put on an antibiotic, ask the clinic that manages your warfarin if your dose needs to be changed.

For safety, carry an ID card or wear a medic alert bracelet stating that you take warfarin. Also, carry a list of all the medicines you take and their doses.

# Do I Need to Change What I Eat?

Vitamin K helps your blood to clot. It can be found in many foods that you should eat for good health. Changing how much vitamin K you take in can change your INR. Try to keep your vitamin K intake about the same each week.

Food	Serving Size	Vitamin K (mcg)
Kale, cooked	1/2 cup	531
Spinach, cooked	1/2 cup	444
Collards, cooked	1/2 cup	418
Swiss chard, raw	1 cup	299
Swiss chard, cooked	1/2 cup	287
Mustard greens, raw	1 cup	279
Turnip greens, cooked	1/2 cup	265
Parsley, raw	1/4 cup	246
Broccoli, cooked	1 cup	220
Brussel sprouts, cooked	1 cup	219
Mustard greens, cooked	1/2 cup	210
Collards, raw	1 cup	184
Spinach, raw	1 cup	145
Turnip greens, raw	1 cup	138
Endive, raw	1 cup	116
Broccoli, raw	1 cup	89
Cabbage, cooked	1/2 cup	82
Green leaf lettuce	1 cup	71
Prunes, stewed	1 cup	65
Romaine lettuce, raw	1 cup	57
Asparagus	4 spears	48
Avocado, cube, slice puree	1 cup	30-48
Tuna, canned in oil	3 ounces	37
Blue/black-berries, raw	1 cup	29
Peas, cooked	1/2 cup	21

Food Values from <http://www.ars.usda.gov/nutrientdata>

While taking warfarin:

- Do not skip meals or binge eat.
- Do not take health food supplements with high doses of vitamin K unless your doctor tells you to. Any vitamin supplements that have vitamin K must be taken each day.
- Do not eat or drink any of these items unless it has been approved by the clinic that manages your warfarin:
  - Herbal teas, green tea and chamomile tea
  - Food supplements such as Boost, Ensure, Carnation Instant Breakfast or Slimfast
  - Large amounts of cranberry juice

If you have questions about what you should or should not eat or drink, ask to speak with the clinic that manages your warfarin or a dietitian.

## Do Herbal Supplements Affect How Warfarin Works?

Certain herbal supplements may affect warfarin. Tell the clinic that manages your warfarin before you start taking any supplements, especially:

- Alfalfa
- Co-enzyme Q10
- Fish oil
- Garlic
- Ginger
- Ginkgo biloba
- Ginseng
- Goldenseal
- Licorice root (real, black licorice)
- MSM
- St. John's Wort
- Turmeric
- Vitamin E

## What About Alcohol and Tobacco Use?

### Alcohol

Limit your intake of alcohol. Try not to drink more than 1 to 2 servings of alcohol per day. Be honest about how much alcohol you drink. One serving of alcohol equals:

- 12 ounces of beer, or
- 5 ounces of wine, or
- 1.5 ounces of liquor

### Tobacco

Tobacco use can affect your INR. If you use tobacco in any form, tell the clinic that manages your warfarin if the amount of tobacco you use changes.

Be honest with the clinic that manages your warfarin about use of marijuana (pot) and other illegal drugs that may change the effects of warfarin.

# What Are the Possible Side Effects?

Side effects of warfarin may include bleeding or an allergic reaction. Side effects may happen even when your INR is in the goal range. It is common to:

- Bleed longer from cuts or nosebleeds
- Have your gums bleed when you brush your teeth
- Bruise easily

Call your doctor if you have:

- Red or dark brown urine
- Red or black, tarry stools
- Vomiting blood or what looks like coffee grounds
- Coughing up blood
- Greater menstrual flow or vaginal bleeding
- Dizziness
- Feeling very weak or tired
- Bad or very long headaches
- Bad stomach pain or back pain
- Swelling, lump, or black-and-blue mark that has no known reason
- Fever or sickness that does not get better
- A bad fall, especially if you hit your head
- A rash

Call 911 if any of the above signs are severe.

## Safety Tips for Preventing Falls

Be careful. A fall could cause bleeding which may be life-threatening. To prevent falls:

- Remove things that you can trip over or slip on such as boxes, papers, books, clothes and shoes from stairs and places where you walk.
- Remove small throw rugs or use double-sided tape to keep the rugs from slipping.
- Keep items you use often in cabinets or shelves that you can reach easily without using a step stool.
- Use non-slip mats in the bathtub and on shower floors.
- Use better lighting inside and outside your home.
  - Turn on lights so you can see where you are going and what is in your path.
  - Add outdoor lighting that is motion activated.
- Wear shoes both inside and outside the house.
- Watch for uneven floor surfaces such as steps, curbs, or broken sidewalk.
- Add:
  - Grab bars next to your toilet and in the tub or shower.
  - Handrails on both sides of steps going into your home.



# Nosebleeds

Most of the time, nosebleeds happen from:

- Blowing your nose too hard
- Having dry air in your home
- Having a cold
- Picking your nose

The skin inside the nasal passages in the nose is fragile and has many blood vessels. Follow these tips to prevent nose bleeds.

- Keep the nasal passages moist:
  - Use a cool air humidifier in the room where you sleep
  - Use nasal saline spray or gel (you can buy this at a pharmacy or store)
  - Drink enough water
  - If on oxygen, use a humidifier for the oxygen concentrator
- Stay away from allergic or irritant triggers
- Stay away from smoke

## General Tips

You can do other things to keep yourself safe while you are taking warfarin:

- If you think your job puts you at high risk for being hurt, talk with the clinic that manages your warfarin.
- Use an electric razor or hair-removal cream to lower the chance of being hurt.
- Use a soft toothbrush. Brush and floss gently so your gums do not bleed.



# Common Questions

## **Can I take warfarin while I am pregnant?**

Pregnant women should not take warfarin. Tell the clinic that manages your warfarin if you are or may become pregnant.

## **Can I breastfeed while taking warfarin?**

Very little warfarin gets into breast milk. The American Academy of Pediatrics has approved the use of warfarin in women who are breast feeding.

## **I am planning to travel. What do I need to do?**

You may need to have blood work done before or during your trip. Before long trips, speak with the clinic that manages your warfarin. Take enough warfarin with you so you do not run out while you are gone. Keep your activity and eating habits as close to your normal routine as you can.

## **What if I need surgery, tests, or dental work?**

You may need to stop taking warfarin before surgery, tests, or dental work. Tell your doctors and dentists that you take warfarin. If you need to stop taking warfarin before a test or surgery, tell the clinic that manages your warfarin.

## **Can I exercise or play sports while taking warfarin?**

Do not play contact sports or take part in other activities that are high risk for being hurt while you are taking warfarin.

## **What if I am sick?**

Not eating well, vomiting, or bad diarrhea may increase the effect of warfarin. If you are sick, call the clinic that manages your warfarin.

## **What if I also have Heart Failure?**

If you have more swelling, your INR and warfarin may be affected. Call the clinic that manages your warfarin if you have swelling.

# Warfarin Medication Calendar

Warfarin Tablet Strength \_\_\_\_\_ mg

Date							
	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Dose (mg)							
Number of tablets							

Date of next INR: \_\_\_\_\_ (Record missed doses, diet changes, etc.)

Warfarin Tablet Strength \_\_\_\_\_ mg

Date							
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Dose (mg)							
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Warfarin Tablet Strength \_\_\_\_\_ mg

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Dose (mg)							
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Date of next INR: \_\_\_\_\_ (Record missed doses, diet changes, etc.)

# Warfarin Medication Calendar

Warfarin Tablet Strength \_\_\_\_\_ mg

Date of Lab	INR Result	Warfarin Dose Instructions	Comments (missed dose, diet changes, etc.)	Next INR Due

## When to Call the Clinic That Manages Your Warfarin

Call if you:

- Start a new medicine (prescription, over-the-counter, herbal, or vitamin product)
- Need to take more or less of a medicine than usual
- Stop taking a medicine
- Have a cut or nosebleed that will not stop bleeding
- Plan to travel
- Need to have a test or surgery
- Change the amount of tobacco you use

## Reminders

- Tell your dentist and other doctors that you are taking warfarin.
  - Remind them before you have any test or surgery.
- Refill your medicines before you run out.
- Try to eat the same amount of green, leafy vegetables each day.



