

# MY GUIDE TO WARFARIN THERAPY

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St. Anthony Anticoagulation Clinic  
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

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# How to Communicate with Our Clinic

It is important the clinic always is able to contact you. Please make sure the clinic has an accurate phone number for you at all times and alternate numbers whenever possible.

Always call the clinic if you have problems, questions, any change in medication, or need to reschedule your appointment. If you miss too many appointments without first rescheduling, you may be discharged from the clinic.

The clinic phone is not staffed by a secretary, so please leave a message and our clinician will return your call between scheduled patients.



Call the clinic at:

**405-272-6223**

**Clinic hours: Weekdays 8:00am – 3:30pm**

**Clinic Closed: Saturday, Sunday, and Wednesday**

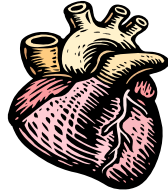
**Clinic is closed but calls are returned on Wednesdays 8:00am – 3:30pm**



- “Make sure we always have an accurate phone number”
- “Call the clinic with problems, changes in medications, questions, or to reschedule”

# What is Coumadin® (warfarin)?

Warfarin is a medication that belongs in a class called *anticoagulants*. Sometimes this drug is called a “blood thinner”. It helps thin your blood to reduce the chance of harmful blood clots forming in your body. Blood clots can cause a stroke, heart attack, or other serious conditions.



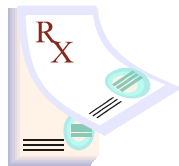
## Coumadin® (warfarin) will:

- Keep your blood from making harmful clots
- Help your blood flow easily
- Help prevent a stroke or heart attack

## Why Do I Need to Take Coumadin® (warfarin)?

There are many reasons why people take Coumadin® (warfarin). While clotting is a normal process in our bodies, serious problems can occur if blood clots too quickly. A clot can break away and move from one part of your body to another. For example, if a clot moves to your brain, it may cause a stroke. Warfarin helps to prevent and treat clots as well as *thromboembolism* (the breaking off of clots). The next two pages will give more detail about various conditions commonly treated with Coumadin® (warfarin).

## Coumadin® (warfarin) can be used for:



- Preventing or treating clots in conditions such as:
  - Stroke, atrial fibrillation, heart valve replacement, heart attack, pulmonary embolism, and others

**My doctor prescribed warfarin for:** \_\_\_\_\_

# How Does Coumadin® (warfarin) Help Me?

## Stroke

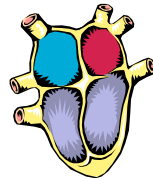


Most strokes are caused by a blood clot that blocks a blood vessel in the brain. This blockage stops blood flow to a part of the brain. When blood flow stops in the brain, brain cells may die and brain damage can occur.

Coumadin® (warfarin) decreases the chance of clot formation in the blood vessels of your brain, which will lower your risk of having a stroke.

## Atrial Fibrillation

Atrial fibrillation is a common heart disorder. The heart has four chambers which work together to move blood through the body. In atrial fibrillation, there are rapid, irregular beats that are out of rhythm. These rapid beats make it hard for the chambers to empty blood completely so blood can thicken, which increases the chance of clots. These clots can travel to the brain and cause a stroke. Coumadin® (warfarin) lowers the chance of the clots forming.



## Heart Valve Replacement

There are many types of artificial valves that may be used to replace your own heart valve. The materials used to make these valves may cause blood to stick and form clots. These clots can travel to the brain and cause a stroke. Coumadin® (warfarin) lowers the chance of clots from forming around the valve.

## Heart Attack

A heart attack, also known as *myocardial infarction*, is caused by a lack of blood supply to the heart muscle. The lack of blood supply sometimes happens when blood vessels supplying the heart are blocked by a clot. Coumadin® (warfarin) lowers the chance of blood clots forming and helps the blood flow through the heart more easily.

## Heart Failure

Heart failure can sometimes occur when the heart muscle has become too weak to push blood through the body the way it used to. In some cases, the heart may not be pumping blood from the heart's chambers quickly enough. The blood can then stay too long in the chambers and thicken, which can result in a clot. Coumadin® (warfarin) lowers the chance of blood clots forming and helps the blood flow through the heart more easily.

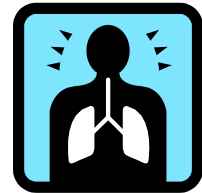


## Deep Vein Thrombosis / Pulmonary Embolism



A deep vein thrombosis (DVT) is a blood clot that has formed in a vein and can lead to damage of the blood vessels. The most common areas to find a DVT are in the veins of your leg, especially in the calf and thigh areas. Less commonly they may be found in the veins of an arm. Symptoms may be swelling, redness, and/or tenderness in that region.

A DVT can also cause a serious lung problem called a pulmonary embolism. A clot in the vein can break away from the vessel and travel to the lungs, which blocks the blood circulation to the lungs. Patients may experience difficulty breathing and chest pain due to this blockage.



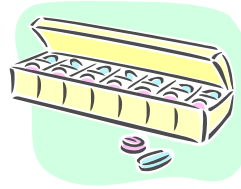
Coumadin® (warfarin) lowers the chance of blood clots forming, which lowers your risk for deep vein thrombosis (DVT) and pulmonary embolism.

## Peripheral Vascular Disease

Peripheral vascular disease is caused by the build-up of fatty plaque in the blood vessels. This plaque makes your blood vessels smaller and reduces blood flow. This reduction in flow increases the chance of blood clots. Coumadin® (warfarin) helps the blood flow easier through smaller blood vessels and decreases clot formation.

# How Do I Take Coumadin® (warfarin)?

Our clinic will instruct you regarding what dose(s) to take throughout the week. We recommend taking warfarin at night, but many patients take it in the morning. Take it at a time of the day that you will REMEMBER to take it. We **strongly** recommend using a pill box to aid you! It reminds you of missed doses and helps deter doubled-doses, which is VERY important with this medication.



## Always Double-Check Your Dose

Coumadin® (warfarin) is color-coded by dosage. The color is the same for each dosage whether it is brand name or a generic. Also, the dosage is imprinted on the tablets. As pharmacists, we know we aren't perfect so double check your pharmacist each time you get a refill to verify it's the correct dosage!

## What If I Miss a Dose?

If you miss a dose by only a few hours, go ahead and take your dose. If it is almost time for the next dose, do not double up on your dose. Make a note of the missed dose and report it to our clinic!

## How Long Will I Have to Take It?

It varies depending on your condition and situation. Your doctor will individualize your therapy duration.

## Will I Continue Taking the Same Dosage?

Your dosage may change from time to time, depending on your blood test results.

# All About Blood Tests

## Why Do I Need Blood Tests?

Blood tests (called an INR) tell us how quickly your blood is clotting. It may vary with different foods you eat, medications, illness, and other factors that affect this medication. Fortunately our clinic offers an easy, accurate means for collecting your INR using a machine that just needs blood from your finger.



## What is an INR?

INR stands for International Normalized Ratio. The INR is a test to determine how fast your blood is clotting. If your INR is LOW it means your blood is too thick and you are at risk for forming clots. If your INR is HIGH, you are at risk for bleeding problems. After testing your INR, the clinician will adjust your Coumadin® (warfarin) dose so that it is right for you. Because the INR is so important, it will be important for you to get your blood tested on the date and time you're told.

**IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT YOU DO NOT ADJUST YOUR DOSE WITHOUT CONSULTING OUR CLINIC.**

## How Often Do I Need a Blood Test?

Your blood should be tested more frequently when you are new to Coumadin® (warfarin) and when new dosages have been prescribed for you. After your INR stabilizes we will test your blood less frequently.

My goal INR range is: \_\_\_\_\_

# Possible Side Effects of Coumadin® (warfarin)

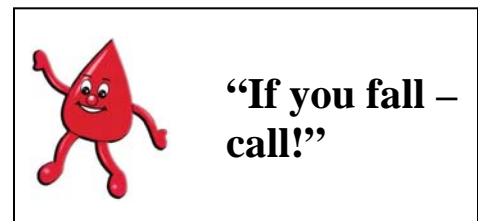
The most serious risk with this medication is hemorrhage (bleeding) in any tissue or organ of the body. Rarely, patients will experience necrosis (death of tissue) and/or gangrene (death of tissue due to loss or reduction in blood supply).

## Slight bleeding is common

- Gum bleeding while brushing teeth
- Occasional nose bleed
- Easy bruising
- Bleeding from a minor cut that stops within a few minutes
- Menstrual bleeding that is a little heavier than normal

## Major bleeding: Call our clinic, your doctor, or go to the emergency department

- Red, dark, coffee, or cola-colored urine
- Bowel movements that are red or look like tar
- Excess bleeding from the gums or nose
- Throwing up coffee-colored or bright red substance
- Coughing up red-tinged secretions
- Severe pain (such as headache or stomachache)
- Sudden, severe bruises
- Excessive menstrual bleeding
- A cut that does not stop bleeding after 10 minutes
- A serious fall
- Hitting your head
- If you feel weak, dizzy, and/or tired it may be a sign you have bleeding somewhere in your body



**\*\*Be aware that you may have bleeding and not be able to see blood. So call your doctor or go to the hospital if you have a serious fall, injury, or hit your head, as you may have internal bleeding and not realize it.**

# When Should I Call?

**Report any illness (it may affect your INR) such as:**

- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Infection
- Fever
- Flu

**Report any unusual bleeding or bruising**

**Report any signs of clotting, such as:**

- Pain anywhere on your body
- Swelling or discomfort
- Shortness of breath
- Chest pain
- Severe headache, tingling/numbness, or confusion



**CALL YOUR DOCTOR AND/OR CALL 9-1-1 IF YOU DO NOT IMMEDIATELY HEAR FROM OUR CLINIC**

## Medical I.D. Bracelets

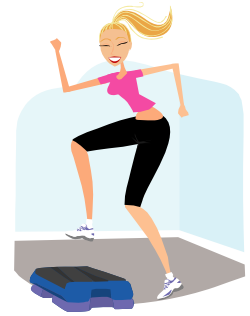
We do recommend medical alert I.D. bracelets for patients taking Coumadin® (warfarin) as it is very important that healthcare workers are aware that you take this medication. Inform all your physicians, dentists, and pharmacies that you take Coumadin® (warfarin).



# How Can I Stay Safe Taking Coumadin® (warfarin)?

Be careful when using objects that could make you bleed. Also, avoid or protect yourself during activities that might lead to injury.

Remember, it is important to have an active lifestyle... just be safe doing it!



## To Help Prevent Injury:

### Inside:

- Use an electric razor
- Use a soft toothbrush
- Use waxed dental floss
- Do not use toothpicks
- Wear shoes or non-skid slippers
- Be careful trimming your nails
- Use caution with knives and scissors
- Do not trim calluses or corns yourself

### Outside:

- Always wear shoes
- Wear gardening gloves when doing yard work
- Avoid activities and sports that can easily hurt you
- Be careful with sharp tools; wear gloves to protect you
- Use caution on icy walkways
- Wear protective gear if you are playing sports



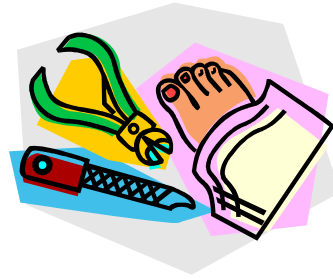
YES



NO



YES



NO



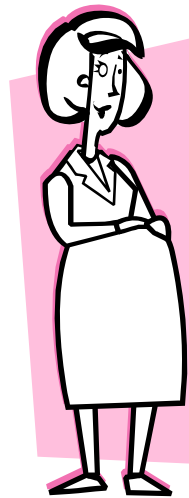
- “Wear a medical I.D. bracelet.”
- “If you fall—call!”
- “Go to the hospital when you are badly hurt. After you’ve been helped, call our clinic during regular hours to let us know what happened.”

# Taking Coumadin® (warfarin) During Pregnancy

## Pregnancy

Coumadin® (warfarin) is not safe during certain months of pregnancy as it may cause serious birth defects. Speak with your doctor if you are of child-bearing age, pregnant, or considering becoming pregnant.

If you become pregnant and your physician wishes to keep you on Coumadin® (warfarin) it may be necessary for your doctor to monitor your warfarin, rather than our clinic.



## Breastfeeding

Breastfeeding is safe during Coumadin® (warfarin) therapy. If you are interested in breastfeeding, speak with your doctor.

# Interactions with Other Medications

Coumadin® (warfarin) may affect how other medications work. Also, other medications can affect Coumadin® (warfarin) as well. It is very important that you let our clinic know ALL the prescription and non-prescription medications, antibiotics, supplements, vitamins, and herbals you are taking. Tell us know if any of the medications change, you start new ones, or stop old ones!

Any product containing aspirin lessens the blood's ability to form clots (thins the blood) and adds to the effects of Coumadin® (warfarin). Never take aspirin without telling our clinic first. It will be up to your physician to determine if you should be on aspirin therapy.

**Many products may contain aspirin so read your labels carefully.**

**Products (as well as their generic products) that may contain aspirin:**

- Excedrin®
- Alka-Seltzer®
- Ascriptin®
- Bayer®
- Bufferin®
- Ecotrin®
- Empirin®
- Aspergum®
- Pepto-Bismol®
- Percodan®
- Kaopectate®

**Medications that may be taken:**

- Mild pain: Tylenol® (acetaminophen). We do not recommend more than 1300mg per day, as this medicine may also affect your Coumadin® (warfarin)
- Laxative: Milk of Magnesia® or Colace®
- Vitamins: Check with our clinicians
- Cold or Allergy: Check with our clinicians as some contain multiple ingredients




# Interactions with Other Medications

All medications must be approved by your doctor and must be reported to our clinic. The following is a list of medications that interact with Coumadin® (warfarin) and should be approved for use by your physician and/or our clinic.

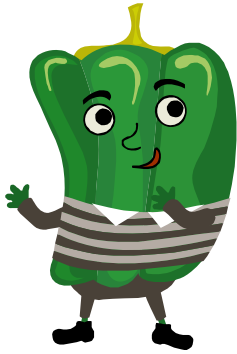
Again, remember to check your labels. Many companies will reformulate the medications and start using new ingredients. Even we pharmacists have a hard time keeping up with these over-the-counter drugs.

- **Naproxen**
  - Aleve®
  - Naprosyn®
  - Anaprox®
  - Pamprin®
  
- **Ibuprofen**
  - Advil®
  - Midol®
  - Motrin®
  
- **Cimetidine**
  - Tagamet® HB
  
- **Famotidine**
  - Pepcid®
  
- **Omeprazole**
  - Prilosec® OTC
  
- **All Herbal Products**
  - Ginseng
  - Green tea
  - Garlic
  - Ginkgo
  - Kava kava
  - ANY OTHER HERBAL PRODUCT



	“Tell our clinic about all medications you are taking, including non-prescription and herbal supplements. Tell us when you start taking new medications, your current ones change, or you stop any medications.”
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# Diet & Coumadin® (warfarin)



**Vitamin K** Warfarin (Coumadin) is a drug that helps prevent clot formation and keeps the blood thin. Many people are aware that there are drug interactions, but often we forget all the many foods that can interact! The main dietary concern with warfarin is vitamin K. When a person consumes more vitamin K than usual, the warfarin is prevented from working as well as it does normally. Therefore, the blood may become thicker and a clot may form. However, if a person eats less vitamin K than usual, the warfarin works too well and the blood may become too thin. So it is VERY important to keep the amount of vitamin K in your diet fairly consistent each week. Many of the green, leafy vegetables contain high amounts of vitamin K. But be aware that many products contain vitamin K

that you may not think of (meal-replacement drinks like Slim Fast, green tea, chewing tobacco, most multi-vitamins), so read your labels! If you are someone who likes these types of foods, then feel free to continue eating them so long as you eat the same amount each week. If you rarely eat these types of foods, it may be better to avoid them all together for the duration of your warfarin therapy. **\*\*VITAMIN-K IS NOT THE SAME AS POTASSIUM (K+)\*\***

**Grapefruit, Cranberry, & Pomegranate** These fruits and their juices should be avoided in patients taking warfarin. They interact with warfarin and may cause very thin blood. What is even more concerning is that some patients are extremely sensitive to these interactions and may have INRs exceeding 8.0! That means the blood is VERY thin. So we recommend all patients avoid these fruits and their juices while on warfarin.



**Alcohol** Alcohol should be avoided while on warfarin. It can make your blood even thinner, which may put you at risk for bleeding. Alcohol also increases the risk of falls & stomach ulcers, which can lead to life-threatening bleeds while on warfarin.



**Smoking** Smoking decreases the effects of warfarin and therefore makes your blood thicker. Smoking alone puts you at increased risk of clots as well. Let us know if your smoking habits change.

# Vitamin K Foods

Remember to keep **HIGH** and **MODERATE** Vitamin K foods consistent in your diet on a weekly basis. You do not have to avoid them!!!

## HIGH VITAMIN K CONTENT

These foods have high amounts of vitamin K & can dramatically affect the thinness/thickness of your blood, so it is important to eat them consistently each week or not at all!

### Beverages:

Green tea or Black tea

### Oils, fats, dressing:

Canola oil, Salad oil, or Soybean oil  
Mayonnaise

### Vegetables:

Broccoli  
Brussel Sprouts  
White cabbage  
Swiss chard  
Chives  
Cilantro  
Endive  
Greens (Collard, Mustard, or Turnip)  
Kale  
Bibb, red leaf, or Romaine lettuce  
Green onion  
Parsley  
Green pepper, cooked  
Spinach  
Watercress

### Meats:

Gizzards, liver, other organ meats should be avoided

due to variability in their vitamin K content

## MODERATE VITAMIN K CONTENT

These foods have less vitamin K than the previous list but have enough to affect how your warfarin is working! Eat these consistently each week, as well.

Stick margarine  
Green apple peeling  
Asparagus  
Celery  
Iceburg lettuce  
Okra  
Cucumber with peel



## LOW VITAMIN K CONTENT

As long as these foods are not eaten excessively, they do not have to be eaten consistently in your diet.

### Beverages:

Coffee  
Brewed teas (Except black or green teas)  
Soda  
Kool-aid  
Lemonade

Fruits/juices (Except grapefruit, cranberry, pomegranate)

Cereals, Breads, Pasta, Crackers, Flour, & Rice

### Sauces:

Catsup  
Yellow mustard  
Olives  
Dill or sweet pickles

Milk and Dairy Products

Sweets

Meats other than liver, gizzard, or organ meats

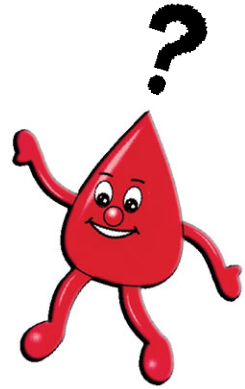
Legumes, such as beans, tofu, and nuts

### Vegetables:

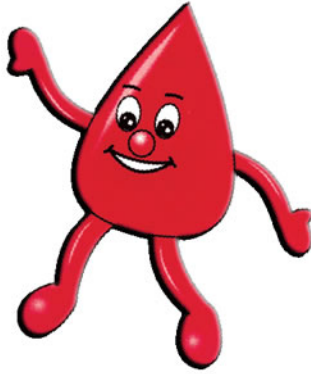
Artichoke  
Green beans  
Beets  
Carrots  
Cauliflower  
Corn  
Cucumber (without peel)  
Eggplant  
Mushrooms  
White or yellow onions  
Potatoes  
Radish  
Squash  
Tomato  
Turnips (without the greens)



# Frequently Asked Questions



1. **Can I still donate blood?** No. The American Red Cross states that no one taking Coumadin® (warfarin) may give blood since Coumadin® (warfarin) makes the blood thin. You may only give blood if your doctor takes you off Coumadin® (warfarin) and you have been off it at least seven (7) days.
2. **Can I still go to the dentist?** Yes. But consult both your physician and dentist before each dental appointment. In some instances you may need to temporarily stop Coumadin® (warfarin) right before your dental appointment or procedure.
3. **What if I need surgery or have to undergo a procedure?** You may have to stop your Coumadin® (warfarin) up to a week beforehand to lower the risk of bleeding. Ask your physician what is right for you as it will vary depending on your specific case and on the type of surgery/procedure you are undergoing.
4. **What would skin necrosis look like?** Have you ever watched the news after they bring down a skier or hiker who was stranded on a mountain? The person may have blacked skin from frost bite, which is similar to how skin necrosis looks in severe cases. Check your extremities, fingers, toes, and other appendages such as your ears for sloughing off of the skin or other changes.
5. **What if I miss a dose?** See page 7 in this booklet.
6. **When should I call the clinic, my doctor, or the Emergency Room?** See pages 3, 9, and 10 in this booklet.
7. **What if I miss an appointment?** We request patients call in advance to let us know they are going to miss an appointment. If you miss too many appointments you may be removed from our clinic. Also, if you frequently miss doses of your medication or do anything that would cause us to fear your safety, we may also have to remove you from our clinic and place you back in your doctor's care.
8. **What foods can I eat?** See pages 15 and 16 in this booklet.
9. **What if I my other medications change?** See pages 13 and 14, and then call our clinic!
10. **What does my INR mean?** See page 8 in this booklet.



## **DON'T FORGET THESE TIPS:**

- **Call the clinic with problems, questions, changes in medications, and to reschedule**
- **Make sure we have an accurate phone number on file for you**
- **Tell all your doctors, dentists, and pharmacies you are on Coumadin® (warfarin)**
- **If you fall—call!**
- **Tell our clinic about all medications you are taking, including non-prescription and herbal supplements. Tell us when you start taking new medications, your current ones change, or you stop any medications**
- **Wear a medical I.D. bracelet**
- **Go to the hospital when you are badly hurt. Call our clinic during regular hours (after you've been helped!) to let us know what happened**
- **You do not have to stop eating foods with Vitamin K in them! The key is CONSISTENCY!**