

Warfarin (Coumadin)

Why am I taking this medicine?

Warfarin is used to prevent blood clots from forming or growing larger. It works by stopping the formation of substances that cause clots. Ask your pharmacists for more information.

How should this medicine be used?

Warfarin comes as a tablet to take by mouth. It is usually taken once a day. Follow the directions on your prescription label carefully, and ask your doctor or pharmacist to explain any part you do not understand. Take warfarin exactly as directed. Do not take more or less or take it more often than prescribed by your doctor.

Continue to take warfarin even if you feel well. Do not stop taking warfarin without talking to your doctor.

What special precautions should I follow?

Before taking warfarin:

- Tell your doctor and pharmacist if you are allergic to warfarin, aspirin, tartrazine (a yellow dye in some medications and processed foods), or any other drugs.
- Tell your doctor and pharmacist what prescription and over-the-counter medicine you are taking, especially other heart medications, antibiotics, aspirin, cimetidine (Tagamet), medicine for high cholesterol and pain, and vitamins. Many medicines interfere with the way warfarin works. It is important that you tell your doctor every medicine that you take, including over-the-counter medicine. Do not take any new medications or stop taking any of your current medications without speaking to your doctor or pharmacist.
- Tell your doctor if you have had your prostate removed, have or have ever had a stroke, kidney or liver disease, high blood pressure, a thyroid condition, diabetes, tuberculosis, a bleeding disorder, ulcers, leukemia, vitamin C deficiency, colostomy bag, or intestinal disease.
- Tell your doctor if you are pregnant, plan to become pregnant, or are breastfeeding. If you get pregnant while taking warfarin, call your doctor.
- If you are having surgery, including dental surgery, tell the doctor or dentist that you are taking warfarin.
- Ask your doctor about the safe use of alcohol while you are taking warfarin.

Coumadin® samples:



Warfarin samples:



What about my diet?

Talk to your doctor or pharmacist about the amount of food you eat with vitamin K, such as liver, green leafy vegetables, broccoli, cauliflower, kale and spinach. You should also talk to them about oil-containing products like salad dressing and mayonnaise.

This information was created and reviewed through a partnership with the UAMS Patient and Family Advisory Councils.

What if I forget to take a dose?

Take the missed dose as soon as you remember it. If it is almost time for the next dose, skip the missed dose and go on with the regular dosing schedule. Do not take a double dose to make up for the missed dose. Write down the date of the missed dose and tell your doctor at your next visit, since missing a dose may alter your blood clotting tests. If you miss doses for 2 or more days, call your doctor right away.

What side effects can this medicine cause?

Side effects from warfarin are not common but they can occur. Warfarin may turn your urine red-orange. This won't hurt you. Warfarin increases your risk for bleeding. So, if you think your urine contains blood, call your doctor right away. Tell your doctor if any of these symptoms are severe or do not go away:

- headache
- upset stomach
- diarrhea
- fever
- skin rash

If you have any of the following symptoms, call your doctor right away:

- unusual bleeding or bruising
- black or bloody stools
- blood in the urine
- tiredness
- fever
- chills
- sore throat
- stomach pain

Where should I keep this medicine?

Keep this medicine in the container it came in, tightly closed, and out of reach of children. Store it at room temperature and away from excess heat and moisture (not in the bathroom). Throw away any medicine that is out of date or no longer needed.

What else should I know?

PT/INR blood draws are tests that monitor your body's response to warfarin. Your doctor will order these lab tests. It is very important to follow up with the Coumadin Clinic or your doctor to check your PT/INR within at least one week (unless your doctor instructs you differently).

Warfarin prevents blood from clotting so it may take longer than usual for you to stop bleeding if you are cut or injured. Carry an ID card or wear a bracelet that says you take warfarin. Do not let anyone else take your medicine.

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Coumadin (Warfarin) and Vitamin K

Warfarin is a medication that is prescribed to help “thin the blood.” The food you eat may change the way this medication affects your body. To help Coumadin work effectively, it is important to keep your vitamin K intake as consistent as possible. Sudden increases in vitamin K intake may decrease the effect of Coumadin. On the other hand, sudden decreases in vitamin K intake could increase the effect of Coumadin. You should avoid major changes in dietary habits, or let your doctor know before changing these habits.

Vitamin K is a vitamin produced by plants and is primarily found in green leafy vegetables and some other foods. Vitamin K plays an essential role in the blood clotting process by making the proteins that stop bleeding. It also helps your body make other proteins essential for blood, bones, and kidneys.

To help make it easier to keep your vitamin K intake consistent:

- Limit your intake of foods “high” in vitamin K to no more than one serving (1 cup raw or ½ cup cooked) each day
- Limit your intake of foods “moderately high” in vitamin K to no more than three servings each day.

Green vegetables, like spinach, kale and collard greens, contain the highest amounts of vitamin K. A variety of other fruits and vegetables also make the high list (see below). Certain oils, such as soybean, canola, cottonseed, and olive oil are higher in vitamin K than peanut, corn, safflower, and sesame oil. Because salad dressings, margarine, mayonnaise, cakes, and pastries can be prepared with a variety of oils, be sure to check the ingredients label to determine what type of oils are in the foods you are eating.

Foods High in Vitamin K:

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| ■ Kale | ■ Spinach | ■ Red Leaf Lettuce |
| ■ Cabbage | ■ Coleslaw | ■ Mustard, Collard & Turnip Greens |
| ■ Lettuce | ■ Broccoli | ■ Sauerkraut |
| ■ Endive | ■ Parsley | ■ Brussels Sprouts |

Foods Moderately High in Vitamin K:

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|--------------|---------------|--------------------------|
| ■ Green Peas | ■ Green Beans | ■ Cucumber (Dill Pickle) |
| ■ Avocado | ■ Asparagus | ■ Mayonnaise |



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Drug Interactions

A laboratory test called a Prothrombin Time (PT) / International Normalized Ratio (INR) measures the time it takes for blood to clot and compares it to an average. The higher the PT/INR, the longer it takes blood to clot. Both your diet and medications can affect your PT/INR levels. The following is a list of how various drugs (including herbals), taken along with Coumadin (warfarin), affect the PT/INR.

These increase PT/INR:

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| ■ Alcohol | ■ Corticosteroids | ■ Propafenone* |
| ■ Amiodarone* | ■ Macrolides (rarely azithromycin) | ■ Rofecoxib |
| ■ Argatroban | ■ Metronidazole* | ■ Tamoxifen |
| ■ Azole antifungals (like Diflucan) | ■ Omeprazole | ■ Thyroid |
| ■ Cimetidine | ■ Phenytoin (initially) | ■ Bactrim* |

**Great increase in the effect of the drug.*

These decrease PT/INR:

- Calcium supplements
 - Cholestyramine
 - Fiber supplements
 - Sucralfate
- Tube-feeding – do not hold tube feeding

These herbals can increase PT/INR:

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|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|
| ■ Angelica Root | ■ Dong Quai | ■ Papaya Extract |
| ■ Capsicum | ■ Silvia Root | ■ Papain |
| ■ Carnitine | ■ Garlic | ■ Red Clover |
| ■ Celery | ■ Ginko | ■ Sweet Clover |
| ■ Chamomile | ■ Licorice Root | ■ Wintergreen |
| ■ Danshen Root | | |

These herbals can decrease PT/INR:

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|-----------------|--------------------|------------|
| ■ Avocado | ■ Ginseng | ■ Psyllium |
| ■ Co-enzyme Q10 | ■ Green Tea | ■ Rosehip |

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