

Information for patients taking warfarin

Read this booklet to learn:

- What warfarin is and why you are taking it
- What blood tests you need to use warfarin safely
- How other medicines and diet can affect warfarin
- What problems (side effects) you should watch for

Name: _____

Date: _____

<p>What is warfarin?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warfarin is an anticoagulant • An anticoagulant helps prevent harmful clots from forming in the blood, or from growing larger • Warfarin is sometimes called a “blood thinner” but it doesn’t actually thin your blood. It decreases the body’s ability to form blood clots by blocking the formation of vitamin K-dependent clotting factors • Warfarin begins to reduce blood clotting within 24 hours after taking the first dose • The full effect may take 5 to 7 days to occur
<p>Why am I taking warfarin?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warfarin has been prescribed to prevent harmful clots from developing or to treat an existing blood clot • Blood clots may form in veins, arteries, or even within the chambers of the heart or on heart valves • A blood clot can slow or stop the flow of blood. • You are taking warfarin because you have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Atrial fibrillation (irregular heartbeat) <input type="checkbox"/> Tissue heart valve replacement <input type="checkbox"/> Artificial heart valve replacement <input type="checkbox"/> Heart valve repair <input type="checkbox"/> Deep vein thrombosis (clot in your leg) <input type="checkbox"/> Pulmonary embolism (clot in you lung) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
<p>How much warfarin should I take</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of warfarin that is needed is different for each person • Your warfarin dose will be adjusted based on the results of a blood test called <i>international Normalized Ratio</i> (INR)
<p>What is INR?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The INR is a blood test that shows whether the amount of warfarin you are taking is too little or too much • Most people have an INR of about 1.0 before they take warfarin • Your target INR is based on how much warfarin you need for your health condition • If your INR is below your target range, this usually means you are at higher risk of forming harmful clots • If your INR is above your target range, you are at higher risk of bruising or bleeding • Your warfarin dose may change from time to time depending on your INR

<p>What is my target INR</p>	<p>Your INR result should be between:</p> <p>_____ to _____</p> <p>If your INR is not within this range, your warfarin dose may need to be changed</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 15px; padding: 10px; background-color: #f0f0f0;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Anticoagulation Clinic uses a point-of-care machine that takes a finger prick blood test • Results are obtained within seconds and discussion on dose adjustment can happen right away </div>
<p>How often do I need to have the INR blood test?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When you first start taking warfarin, you may need to have your blood tested twice a week • As your results become more consistent and your warfarin dose becomes more stable, you will be scheduled for regular INR tests • This may be once every month or more, depending on your situation • It is very important that you get your blood tested on the scheduled date • If you cannot make the appointment, call 416-530-6043 to reschedule
<p>Can I take other medicines?</p>	<p>Many medicines can change how warfarin works in your body. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prescription medications • Herbals • Vitamins • Supplements • Over-the-counter medicines - for example, ibuprofen (Advil®), or acetaminophen (Tylenol®) <p>Tell the clinic pharmacist about changes to any medications. Your dose of warfarin may have to be adjusted or you may have to do more INR tests</p>
<p>What other things will affect the way warfarin works in my body?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you get sick with a cold, flu, nausea, vomiting or diarrhea, or any other illness, it may affect your INR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell your health care provider about any changes to your health, activities and habits

<p>How should I take warfarin?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take your warfarin once a day, at the same time • It may be taken with food or on an empty stomach • It may be taken with other medications • Warfarin can be taken with or without food • Warfarin will come in different colours; each colour represents a different dose <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 mg – bright pink • 2 mg – light purple/grey • 2.5 mg – green • 3 mg – brown • 4 mg – blue • 5 mg – peach • 10 mg - white
<p>What if I miss a dose?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you miss a dose, take it as soon as you remember, if it is on the same day • If you remember the next day, take your regular dose at the regular scheduled time • Mark the missed dose on your calendar • Call the Anticoagulation Clinic if you miss more than two days
<p>Do I need to avoid foods with vitamin K?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foods that are high in vitamin K may reduce the effect of warfarin and decrease your INR • But you do not need to stop eating these types of foods • If you usually eat a few servings of one or more of these foods each day, it is OK to keep doing so • It is important to be consistent with dietary intake and try to eat the same amount every day • The Anticoagulation Clinic will ask you about your diet at each diet and adjust your warfarin dose accordingly <p>Examples of foods that are high in vitamin K include leafy greens like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spinach • Kale • Broccoli • Brussel sprouts • Cabbage, coleslaw, sauerkraut • Parsley • Green tea and oolong tea

Is it safe to drink alcohol?

Don't drink more than 1 alcoholic drink a day while you are on warfarin

1 drink is equal to:



12 ounces (341 mL) of



5 ounces (142 mL) of



1 ½ ounces (43 mL) of

Drinking more than this can raise your INR and increase your chance of bleeding

Are there any side effects of warfarin?

- Side effects from warfarin therapy do not occur very often, but bleeding is the most common
 - Warfarin does not make you bleed but will make any source of bleeding bleed more
- Slight bleeding:
 - Nose bleeds and gum bleeds
 - If your nose starts bleeding, pinch and hold tightly for 10 minutes. Repeat for another 10 minutes if it is still bleeding. Contact your doctor or go to a health clinic or emergency room
 - A soft toothbrush may help decrease bleeding of the gums
 - Easy bruising
 - Bleeding after a cut that takes a little longer to stop
 - Longer menstrual bleeding
 - **Do not** stop taking warfarin if you experience minor bleeding
- Major bleeding:
 - Red, dark or coffee coloured urine
 - Red or black bowel movements
 - Coughing or vomiting bright red blood or “coffee grounds”
 - A cut that does not stop after 10 minutes of pressure
 - A serious fall or hit to the head
 - A severe headache with nausea or vomiting
 - Contact your health care provider or go to the nearest emergency room right away

What about pregnancy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do not take warfarin if you are pregnancy or are trying to get pregnant• There are other types of anticoagulation medicine that are safer• Talk to your doctor or anticoagulation clinic to switch to another medicine to prevent harm to your unborn baby
Remember:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Take your warfarin around the same time every day• Regular blood testing (INR) is important to keep you safe on warfarin• Major changes in diet, illness, medications or error (missed doses) can impact your INR• Warfarin will make any source of bleeding worse• Contact your health care provider if you become pregnant on warfarin• Continue healthy exercise – but be safe in doing so