

WARFARIN (COUMADIN) THERAPY

DISCHARGE INSTRUCTIONS

WHAT IS WARFARIN?

Warfarin is the generic name for Coumadin, an anticoagulant. It is a "blood thinner" which slows down the blood clotting process.

It is used to treat or prevent clots in veins or arteries that may occur in the lungs, heart, brain, or legs.

WHY DO I HAVE TO TAKE COUMADIN?

Your healthcare provider has prescribed this medication for you to prevent the formation of damaging blood clots or you have one of the following health conditions/risk factors which requires either short-term or lifetime use of this drug:

- Atrial fibrillation (fast, irregular heartbeat)
- Heart valve replacement
- Orthopedic surgery
- Tendency to form clots
- History of Stroke (CVA)
- History of Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT)
- History of Pulmonary Embolism (PE)

Your healthcare provider will explain the length of use, medication dosage, and the amount of blood tests needed while taking warfarin.



LAB TESTS

INTERNATIONAL NORMALIZED RATIO/INR (2.0-3.0) a blood clotting test used to monitor warfarin therapy. *A high value indicates the blood is "too thin". A low value means that the blood will clot too easily.*

Doses are adjusted every few days at first, aiming for the desired target range of INR. As treatment is continued it may be done every week or two. Changes in the dose takes several days to affect the INR result.

It is very important for you to go to all of your follow-up appointments and to check your INR within 5-7 days of discharge.

HOW SHOULD I TAKE COUMADIN?

Coumadin is taken once a day - at the same time each day. It can be taken with or without food and with other medications.

DO NOT!!

Skip a dose or take a double dose.



DIETARY CONCERNS

Vitamin K is an important part of the blood clotting process.

Keep your daily intake of vitamin K regular and consistent.

Vitamin K is found in all foods, but especially green leafy vegetables, like, Swiss chard, Kale, Brussels sprouts, Broccoli, Lettuce, Collard greens, Spinach, and Green tea.

MOST COMMON SIDE EFFECT

Warfarin reduces the blood's ability to clot, therefore the most common side effect is bleeding. Control any bleeding by applying firm, prolonged pressure to the area. Call your doctor or go to the ER if you are unable to control bleeding or are not sure how serious your bleeding is.

POINTS TO CONSIDER:

Women are at a greater risk than men

Alcohol and drug abuse increase the risk of bleeding. Limit alcohol consumption to one drink per day. (4 oz wine, 1.5 oz hard liquor, 12 oz beer)

A nosebleed is the most common type of bleeding. **Do Not** blow nose forcefully.

Gums may bleed. Use a soft bristled toothbrush and waxed floss.

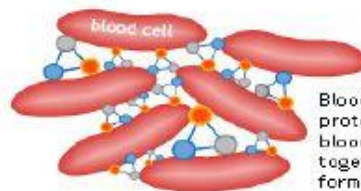
Bruising (*large or sudden*) - limit activities that may result in injury like contact sports.

Red or coffee ground colored vomit or dark and tarry stools could indicate a GI bleed.

How Warfarin Affects Blood Clotting



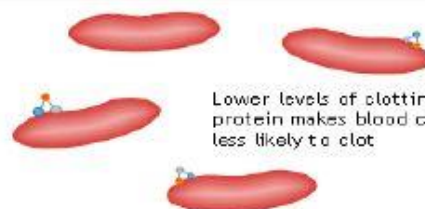
Vitamin K, produced by the body, helps form blood-clotting proteins



Blood-clotting proteins hold blood cells together to form clots



Warfarin reduces the body's ability to make Vitamin K which interferes with protein creation



Lower levels of clotting protein makes blood cells less likely to clot

DID YOU KNOW?

Medication such as aspirin or those that thin the blood and drinks like cranberry juice and alcohol can increase the effects of Coumadin and cause increased risk of bleeding.