



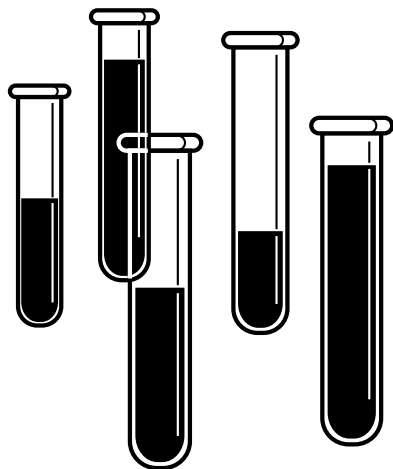
FROM THE OFFICE OF DR.

# What you need to know about your warfarin therapy

Your doctor has prescribed warfarin (Coumadin), which is an anticoagulant medication. “Anti” means *against*, and “coagulant” means *causing blood clotting*. Therefore, an anticoagulant is a drug that helps prevent clots from forming in the blood.

## Blood testing

When taking warfarin, it is important to have your blood tested to ensure that you are not getting too much or too little



medication. The blood test is called the **international normalized ratio (INR)**. The INR is the ratio of your prothrombin time (PT) to the average PT for patients who are

not taking an anticoagulant. The PT is a measure of how fast your blood clots. The higher the INR, the greater the anticoagulant effect. The target INR differs depending on the reason why warfarin is prescribed; for most conditions, it is between 2.0 to 3.0.

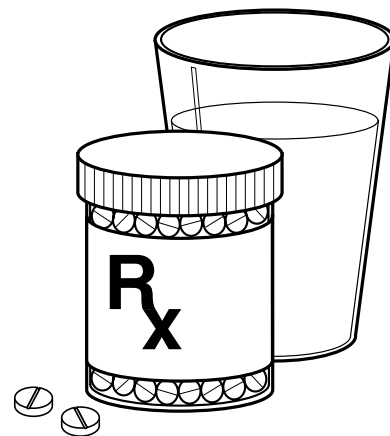
The blood test is performed at a laboratory or in a clinic with a fingerstick test—usually once a week to once a month, as directed by your doctor. The blood tests usually are best done in the morning so that your doctor can relay the results to you that afternoon. If your doctor changes your dose of warfarin, write the new dose down—preferably on a personal dose calendar like the one provided at the end of this handout.

## How to take warfarin

Coumadin tablets are round and scored, which means that they can be broken in half. The color of the pill depends on the dose:

- Pink = 1 mg of warfarin
- Lavender = 2 mg
- Green = 2.5 mg
- Tan = 3 mg
- Blue = 4 mg
- Peach = 5 mg

- Teal or blue-green = 6 mg
- Yellow = 7.5 mg
- White = 10 mg



Other brands of warfarin should have the same colors and strengths as the Coumadin brand tablets. However, other brands of warfarin tablets may have a different shape or appearance. For example, they may be oval or square.

Take your warfarin dose as instructed once a day. It can be taken with or without food. Try to take it at the same time each day. It is recommended to take your warfarin every evening. A pill box can help you remember to take your medication. If you accidentally skip a dose, do not double the next one.



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**Diet and exercise**

- Eat a sensible, well-balanced diet.
- Be aware that foods containing large amounts of vitamin K (dark green vegetables such as broccoli and spinach, for example) can affect the way warfarin works. Although you do not have to avoid these foods, try to keep your intake of them steady from week to week.
- It is best to avoid alcohol while taking warfarin because it can increase the medication's effectiveness, which increases your chance of bleeding.
- Your doctor may want you to avoid participating in activities or sports that may result in a serious fall or injury.

**If you need other medications**

Many medications and dietary supplements can affect the way warfarin works. These may include:

- Prescription medications
- Nonprescription medications such as aspirin, nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs or

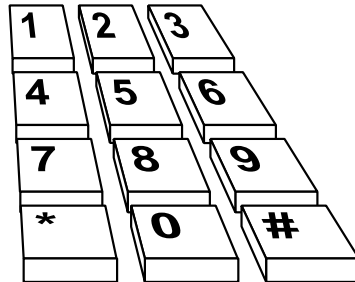
NSAIDs (these include ibuprofen and naproxen), cough or cold remedies, and medications for pain or discomfort such as acetaminophen (Tylenol).

- Herbal products, natural remedies, or nutritional supplements

Therefore, before taking any new medication or medication prescribed by another doctor or dentist, check with the health care provider who monitors your warfarin therapy.

**When to call your doctor**

Call your doctor if you notice any of the following signs of bleeding or illness:



- Feeling more weak or tired than usual or looking pale (symptoms of anemia)

- Bleeding from cuts that won't stop after applying pressure for 10 minutes
- Coughing or vomiting blood (which may look like coffee grounds)
- Bleeding from the nose, gums, or ears
- Unusual color of the urine or stool (including dark brown urine, red or black [tarry] stools)
- Bruises on your skin for unknown reasons
- Menstrual bleeding that is heavier than usual
- A fever or illness that gets worse
- A serious fall or a blow to the head
- Unusual pain or swelling
- Dizziness
- Difficulty breathing.

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

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ INR: \_\_\_\_\_ (Range: \_\_\_\_\_) Next Visit: \_\_\_\_\_

Take Coumadin (warfarin) \_\_\_\_\_ mg tablets as follows:

Sun.	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.
_____ tabs	_____ tabs	_____ tabs	_____ tabs	_____ tabs	_____ tabs	_____ tabs
_____ mg	_____ mg	_____ mg	_____ mg	_____ mg	_____ mg	_____ mg