

Coumadin (Warfarin)

Your physician has prescribed Coumadin as a necessary part of your medical treatment. The foods you eat may affect the way Coumadin works. Please observe the following instructions while taking this medication.

1. It is best to remain on your same general diet when on Coumadin therapy. Check with your doctor before making any major changes to your diet. Your doctor will make changes to your medication dosage with changes in dietary intake.
2. Foods that affect Coumadin action are primarily those that are high in Vitamin K. **This does not mean that you cannot eat foods containing Vitamin K. It simple means that you need to be consistent with your intake.** A diet containing a consistent Vitamin K content of 70 to 140 micrograms (the daily dietary range) is recommended. Limit intake to less than 200 micrograms per day. **Remember do not eat a small amount of Vitamin K one day and double up the next day.**
3. **Do not start taking any supplemental vitamins which contain Vitamin E or Vitamin K while taking Coumadin.** Vitamin E may increase the anticoagulant effect of Coumadin and cause bleeding. Vitamin K decreases the anticoagulant effect.
4. Alcohol may be consumed in moderation. **Drink no more than one serving of alcohol per day** (4 oz of wine, or 12 oz of beer, or 1 ½ ounces of liquor per day).
5. **Avoid herbal teas** (especially green teas which contain coumarin) and **Papain** (Papaya enzyme to aid digestion). **Avoid large amounts of fried or boiled onions** (as in French onion soup), as well as cooking oil with silicone

additives.

6. The attached Vitamin K list will help you to choose foods to keep your Vitamin K intake constant. If any questions, please ask for clarification.

What is Coumadin® (Warfarin) and why is it prescribed?

Coumadin® should only be used under the supervision of a doctor.

It reduces your body's ability to make blood clots. Blood is meant to flow through the body without stopping. Normally, blood should only clot when an injury occurs to the wall of a vessel. The body's ability to clot normally prevents even the smallest cut from being fatal.

In some instances and diseases, blood can clot in areas of the body where it shouldn't. This could be dangerous and possibly even deadly. Some of the common reasons why anticoagulation therapy is started are listed below.

Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT) - a clot can form in the veins of an extremity, usually in the legs.

Pulmonary embolism (PE) - a blood clot in a vessel of the lungs. This is usually a clot that has traveled from the legs.

Atrial fibrillation/flutter- this is an irregular heartbeat where the upper chambers of the heart do not contract normally. Blood clots can potentially form and cause a stroke.

Mechanical heart valves- If a blood clot develops on this type of valve, the valve will not properly function. Mechanical valves require lifelong Coumadin® therapy.

Congestive heart failure (CHF) - when the heart does not pump blood as vigorously, there is an increased risk of developing clots.

Heart Attack/Stroke- anticoagulation therapy is sometimes prescribed to lower the risk of another heart attack and stroke.

Hypercoagulable conditions- some people are at an increased risk of developing blood clots due to their genetic makeup. Factor Five (V) Leiden and Protein C Deficiency are two examples.

Surgical procedures- Anticoagulation is sometimes initiated after surgery to reduce the risk of clot formation.

How is Coumadin® Taken and Monitored?

Coumadin® tablets come in different colors that correspond to different strengths. Each time your Coumadin® is refilled, be certain that the tablet is the same color that you have previously taken. If you are unsure, speak to the pharmacist or call our office.

Coumadin® should only be taken as directed by your physician. It should be taken in the evening at the same time every day. If you skip or miss a dose, it can be taken that same day. If you missed a dose and it is the next day, call our office for instructions. Do not double doses unless directed by your physician. A daily pill box or calendar will help you keep track of your individual dose of Coumadin®

Coumadin® has a very narrow range of being effective against clots. The only way your doctor can tell if therapy is working is to test your blood. The blood test is called the INR (International Normalized Ratio). The INR is reported as a number and, if the number reported is too low, your blood is “too thick” and you will need a higher dose. If the number is too high, your blood is “too thin” and you will have to take less Coumadin®.

Your number should be in the range of _____

When starting on Coumadin® your lab work will fluctuate as the anticoagulation clinic attempts to find the correct dose for you. It is very important to have your blood work done when advised by the clinic. At first, your blood work may have to be drawn once a week. The goal is to get your blood work in therapeutic range as fast as possible. Eventually, your blood work will only need to be drawn once a month.

Remember:

- * Pay attention to the color of your tablets.
- * Never skip or double a dose without your doctor's permission.
- * Take Coumadin® in the evenings at the same time each day.
- * Get blood work drawn as directed.
- * We will always call you with your lab results. If you do not hear from us 24 hours after having lab work, call our office.

Other Medications and Coumadin®

Anticoagulants interact with many medications. Both prescription and non-prescription medications can cause your INR to change. **Call our office as soon as possible after a medication has been added or changed.** Usually, you should have blood work drawn 3-5 days after a medication change to assess its effect on your INR.

Alcohol: Alcohol can dramatically **increase** your INR and put you at risk for bleeding. Consistent intake of alcohol (no more than one glass of wine a day) usually does not increase your INR. But excessive alcohol intake and binge drinking can place you at very high risk of a serious bleeding event.

Remember:

- * Keep your diet consistent.
- * Report any changes in your diet (being sick and not eating normally, trying new diets).
- * Nutritional drinks can affect your INR.
- * Excessive or binge use of alcohol can put you at risk for serious bleeding. Limit alcohol to 1 glass of wine/beer daily.

Side Effects of Anticoagulation Therapy

Because Coumadin® is an anticoagulant, bleeding is a side effect. Patients on Coumadin® will tend to bruise more easily and if an injury is suffered (like a scrape or small cut) a person on Coumadin® will bleed longer.

A general rule of thumb is that mild bleeding should subside within a few minutes after direct pressure is applied to the area. Your INR should be checked even if you develop minor bleeding that stops.

Patients on Coumadin® should monitor themselves for:

- Unexplained nosebleeds
- Bleeding of the gums when brushing or flossing your teeth
- Vomiting or coughing up blood
- Blood in your urine or stool (red or black stools)
- Unexplained bruising
- Cuts that do not stop bleeding
- Excessive bleeding during your menstrual cycle
- Unusual pain and discoloration of skin soon after starting therapy.
- Sudden headache that is unrelieved by pain medication.

Contact your doctor immediately if you have any of these signs of bleeding.

704.332.3632

You may be asked to have your INR checked or may be advised to go to the nearest emergency room.

Especially important

If you develop major bleeding (vomiting blood or bleeding that will not stop), or if you develop the sudden headache described above, do not call your doctor. ***Call 911 and go to the nearest emergency room*** This could be an indication that you are bleeding internally or bleeding in the brain.

To lower the risks of bleeding, it is very important to follow the directions of your physician.

Coumadin® for the procedure, please contact our office. Your cardiologist will advise if you can hold your Coumadin® and for how long.

Some people, such as patients with mechanical valves, will need to be given another type of anticoagulant to ensure that clots do not develop while not taking Coumadin®. When your procedure is done, the provider in charge of your procedure will advise you when to restart your Coumadin®. It should be as soon as possible to avoid developing blood clots. You should take your Coumadin® as you did before the procedure and have your INR checked 1 week after restarting your Coumadin®. Be aware that anytime you stop your Coumadin®, you are putting yourself at an increased risk of developing blood clots.

What happens if I miss a dose of Coumadin®?

If you realize that you missed a dose of Coumadin® and it is the same day (example- you take your medicine at 5p.m. but realize that at 9p.m. you missed your dose) you may take your missed dose.

If you realize you missed a dose and it is NOT the same day, call our office for instructions.

DO NOT DOUBLE YOUR DOSE OF COUMADIN®.

Miscellaneous Need to Know Information

1. You can have your INR drawn at any laboratory that you choose. Regardless of where you had your blood drawn, **if you do not hear results from us within 24 hours, please call our office.** Our office calls every patient with results, even when the INR is therapeutic.
2. It is very important that we be able to contact you with results. If you do not use an answering machine or voicemail, please let us know of an alternate phone number or emergency contact person to contact in case we cannot reach you.
3. Being non-compliant with any aspect of anticoagulation therapy (whether taking the wrong dose of Coumadin®, not taking your Coumadin® as advised, or not getting your blood drawn when advised) puts you at an increased risk for developing blood clots or suffering a serious bleeding event. If there are multiple instances of non-compliance, please be aware that you may be dismissed from the Anticoagulation Clinic and possibly could be dismissed as a patient from Mid Carolina Cardiology.

The Most Important Ideas to Remember about Coumadin Therapy

- **Take Coumadin® only as directed by your physician.**
- **Take Coumadin® in the evening by itself.**
- **Keep your diet consistent while taking Coumadin®**

- All changes in medications (prescription, non-prescription, and herbal medications) should be reported to Randolph Cardiology.
- Any signs and symptoms of bleeding while taking Coumadin® should be reported to Randolph Cardiology. With signs and symptoms of major bleeding (bleeding that does not stop or a sudden severe headache), 911 should be called.
- If you need to stop Coumadin® for surgery or medical procedure, you must contact RANDOLPH CARDIOLOGY BEFORE you begin holding your Coumadin®.
- Use caution with activities that could result in bleeding (gardening, sports, shaving, etc.). Use an electric razor, avoid sharp objects, avoid contact sports and always wear your safety belt.
- Get your blood work drawn when advised by Randolph Cardiology. Successful use of Coumadin® depends on you!

Remember:

- * Call our office as soon as possible with any medication changes.
- * Both prescription and non-prescription medications can affect your INR and your Coumadin® dose.
 - * Acetaminophen can be taken with Coumadin® occasionally. Call our office if it is needed more often.
- * Herbal and all-natural products CAN affect your INR. Let us know what products you are taking.