

Vail Valley Medical Center Anticoagulation Clinic - Warfarin Teaching Guide
U.S. BRAND NAMES - Coumadin®; Jantoven™

What is warfarin?

Warfarin is a blood thinner that is used to thin the blood so that clots will not form.

How does warfarin work?

Our body requires Vitamin K to make clotting factors. Warfarin inhibits the activity of vitamin K, therefore reduces the amount of clotting factors produced by our body. Less clotting factors lead to less chance of blood clot formation.

Why do I need to take warfarin?

Patients can be on warfarin for several reasons. These include:

- Atrial fibrillation (heart beats rapidly and irregularly)
- Deep venous thrombosis (clot in the arm or leg) (DVT)
- Pulmonary embolus (clot in the lungs) (PE)
- Replacement of certain valves in the heart
- Prevention of DVT and PE after surgery or when critically ill

If you have atrial fibrillation, blood is not completely emptied from your heart with each beat. Some remaining blood pools in the heart and can form a clot. If this happens and the clot breaks loose, it can travel up to the brain where it can lead to a stroke and possibly death.

If you have had a clot form in your arm, leg, or lung, these clots have the potential to grow bigger or break loose. They can then travel into the lungs or to the brain, potentially causing a stroke.

If you have had certain valves replaced in your heart, the new valve material is different than your body's original valves. You need to be on warfarin to prevent clots from forming on these new valves.

How long do I have to be on warfarin?

This depends on why you are on warfarin as well as several other factors specific to each person. For atrial fibrillation and heart valve replacement, warfarin will likely be a life-long therapy. If you are on warfarin for a clot you have developed in an arm, leg, or lung, and this is your first clot, you will usually be treated for three to six months. If you have had more than one clot in the past, then the therapy may be life-long. For prevention of DVT/PE after a surgery, your doctor will assess your risks and determine the duration of therapy.

How much do I take?

Your health care provider determines how much warfarin you need to take (your dosage) based on your blood tests. This blood test is called a prothrombin time test or protime (PT) for short. It is reported as an International Normalized Ratio (INR). Your warfarin dose may need frequent adjustments based on your INR.

What is my INR goal?

INR tells us how long it takes for your blood to clot compared to average. The normal INR for people not on warfarin is 1. The target INR for people on warfarin varies based on various reasons that put them on warfarin. The most common target is 2.5 (range 2.0-3.0). It is very important to keep your INR within the range. If INR is too low, you are still at a risk of clotting. If your INR is too high, you are at a higher risk of bleeding.

When will I have to take a PT/INR test?

When you start taking warfarin, you may have PT/INR tests every day for a few days, then perhaps one time every week. This will help your health care provider decide which dosage of warfarin is right for you. PT/INR tests will be needed at periodic intervals to help keep your PT/INR in the best range for your medical condition. The goal will be to check your PT/INR once a month. It is important to follow the PT/INR schedule recommended by your health care provider.

How do I take warfarin?

Take this medicine at a similar time of day. You may take it with or without food. Take with food if it causes an upset stomach. If you miss a dose, take the missed dose as soon as possible. If it is almost time for the next dose, skip the missed dose and return to your regular schedule. Do not take a double dose or extra doses. Do not change dose or stop medicine without talking with your healthcare provider.

Factors that may affect your INR

Vitamin K and vitamin K containing foods and supplements

Vitamin K may lower your INR and decrease the effects of warfarin. Keep vitamin K intake similar from day to day. Do not make changes in your normal diet. Vitamin K is mostly found in green, leafy vegetables (alfalfa, asparagus, broccoli, brussel sprouts, collard greens, cabbage, cauliflower, kale, lettuce, spinach, water cress), green tea, liver, and some vegetable oils. Foods such as these can decrease the effects of warfarin. Many multivitamins contain vitamin K. Check the vitamin K content in your multivitamins and be consistent with your brand.

Cranberry: Cranberry products and cranberry juice may increase the risk of bleeding. Avoid cranberry juice while on warfarin.

Medications

Medications may increase or decrease your INR. Do not start or stop taking a medication without talking to your doctor. This includes prescription, over-the-counter, and herbal medications. Some medications may not affect your INR, but may increase your risk of bleeding due to additive anti-platelet effect, such as NSAIDS (ibuprofen, naproxen), aspirin, Plavix.

Alcohol

Regular consumption of alcohol will reduce the effects of warfarin and lower INR. However, binge drinking will increase INR and risk of bleeding. Avoid binge drinking while on warfarin. Regular consumption of small amount of alcohol is ok, but it is important to be consistent.

Illness

Critical illnesses, infections and other medical conditions may affect your INR. Closer monitoring of INR may be needed when you are ill.

Side effects of this medicine:

The most common side effect of warfarin is bleeding. Many factors including travel, changes in diet, environment, general health and medication may affect your response to warfarin. To lower the risk of bleeding, your PT/INR should be kept within a range that is right for you. Please contact your health care provider right away if you experience signs or symptoms of bleeding such as:

- headache, dizziness or weakness
- bleeding from shaving or other cuts that does not stop
- nosebleeds
- unusual bleeding of gums when brushing your teeth
- throwing up blood
- unusual bruising (black-and-blue marks on your skin) for unknown reasons
- red or dark brown urine
- red or black color in your stool
- more bleeding than usual when you get your menstrual period or unexpected bleeding from the vagina
- unusual bleeding or swelling

Serious, but rare, side effects of warfarin include death of skin tissue and "purple toes syndrome."

Contact your health care provider when:

- You begin, take a different amount, or stop taking a medication or over-the-counter, herbal, or vitamin product
- You think you may be pregnant
- You have a cut that will not stop bleeding or are bruising more easily
- You are planning to travel

Foods - List is a partial listing of foods.		Vitamin K₁
<i>Portion sizes for foods low in vitamin K content apply to 3.5 ounces for beverages and meats, medium-sized whole fruits and 1 cup or less for other foods listed unless otherwise stated.</i>		
Beverages		
Coffee (caffeinated, brewed, decaffeinated, instant plain)		Low
Cola (regular and diet)		Low
Fruit Juices (assorted types)		Low
Milk		Low
Tea (black, brewed; green, brewed (Although dried tea leaves are high in vitamin K content, brewed tea is not a significant source of vitamin K)		Low
Coffee (tap)		Low
Grain Products		
Bagel (plain)		Low
Bread (assorted types)		Low
Cereal (assorted types)		Low
Flour (assorted types)		Low
Oatmeal (instant, dry)		Low
Rice (white)		Low
Spaghetti (dry)		Low
Dairy Products		
Butter		Low
Cheddar Cheese		Low
Eggs		Low
Sour Cream		Low
Yogurt		Low
Fats and Dressings		
Margarine	7 Tbsp	Medium
Mayonnaise	7 Tbsp	High
Oils (Canola, Salad, Soybean)	7 Tbsp	High
Oils (olive)	7 Tbsp	High
Oils (corn, peanut, safflower, sesame, sunflower)	7 Tbsp	Low
Fruits		
Apple		Low
Banana		Low
Blueberries		Low
Cantaloupe		Low
Grapes		Low

Foods - List is a partial listing of foods.		Vitamin K₁
Grapefruit		Low
Lemon		Low
Orange		Low
Peach		Low
Meat		
Beef		Low
Chicken		Low
Ham		Low
Mackerel		Low
Pork		Low
Shrimp		Low
Tuna		Low
Turkey		Low
Vegetables		
Asparagus	7 spears	Medium
Avocado	1 small	Medium
Beans (green)	$\frac{3}{4}$ cup	Low
Broccoli	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup	High
Brussel Sprouts	5 sprouts	High
Cabbage	1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups	High
Cabbage (red)	1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups	Medium
Carrot	$\frac{2}{3}$ cup	Low
Cauliflower	1 cup	Low
Celery	2 $\frac{1}{2}$ stalks	Low
Collard Greens	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup	High
Corn	$\frac{2}{3}$ cup	Low
Corn (peel removed)	1 cup	Low
Eggplant	1 $\frac{1}{4}$ cups	Low
Endive (raw)	2 cups	High
Green Scallion (raw)	$\frac{2}{3}$ cup	High
Kale (raw leaf)	$\frac{3}{4}$ cup	High
Lettuce (raw, bibb, red leaf)	1 $\frac{3}{4}$ cups	High
Lettuce (raw, iceberg)	5 leaves	Medium
Mushroom	1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups	Low
Mustard Greens (raw)	1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups	High
Onion		Low
Parsley chopped	1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups	High
Peas green, cooked	$\frac{2}{3}$ cups	Medium
Pepper raw, green		Low
Potato		Low

Foods - List is a partial listing of foods.		Vitamin K₁
Pumpkin		Low
Sauerkraut (canned)	½ cup	Low
Spinach (raw leaf)	1 ½ cups	High
Tomato		Low
Turnip Greens (raw, chopped)	1 ½ cups	High
Watercress (raw, chopped)	3 cups	High
Condiments and Sweeteners		
Honey		Low
Jello/Gellatin		Low
Peanut Butter		Low
Pickle (dill)	1 medium	Medium
Sugar (white, granulated)		Low

Vail Valley Medical Center V Anticoagulation Clinic

Please read the following disclaimer. Once you have read and understand your rights and responsibilities as a patient of the Vail Valley Medical Center Anticoagulation Clinic sign and date at the bottom of this form. Then return the completed form prior to your next appointment.

I () acknowledge that the staff of the Vail Valley Medical Center Anticoagulation Clinic (WMCACC) has explained the risks and benefits of my anticoagulation therapy. I understand the importance and the potential dangers associated with chronic anticoagulation therapy.

I agree to keep my regularly scheduled appointments with the WMCACC in order to avoid the dangers associated with my anticoagulation therapy. If I am not able to keep my appointment I will notify the WMCACC staff at least 24 hours prior to my appointment so that I can reschedule. I acknowledge that care will be returned to my primary care provider if I do not keep my scheduled appointments, or do not reschedule in a timely manner,

I understand that the WMCACC staff is responsible only for my anticoagulation management. The WMCACC will not prescribe any medications or laboratory tests that are not associated with my anticoagulation therapy. If I have questions or concerns about other unrelated issues I will contact my primary care provider.

I understand that at any point I can refuse the care of the WMCACC. I also understand that I can have access to any medical records associated with my anticoagulation management upon request.

Printed Name: _____ **Date:** _____

Signed: _____ **Date:** _____

Vail Valley Medical Center Anticoagulation Clinic

Drug Interactions

Coumadin has many drug interactions. Please call the Vail Valley Medical Center Anticoagulation Clinic at 970-471-4948 whenever you make any additions or deletions to your medication list. This includes herbal supplements, vitamins and over the counter items. We will evaluate the effects of these changes in your medications on your anticoagulation therapy.

WHEN TO CALL YOUR ANTICOAGULATION CLINIC

1. When you miss a dose of your warfarin (Coumadin®).
2. When there is a change in any of your medications (including prescription medications, over-the-counter medications, herbal or natural supplements, and/or vitamins/supplements).
3. When your dietary intake of vitamin K containing foods changes.
4. If you notice any unusual or prolonged bleeding (red or dark brown urine, red or dark tarry stools, nosebleeds lasting longer than 5 minutes, or bright red blood in your eye).
5. If you notice any significant bruising (bruises that grow or become darker, significant trauma from a fall, or if you hit your head).
6. If you develop significant illness (vomiting, diarrhea, infection, pain, or swelling).
7. If your warfarin (Coumadin®) tablet changes appearance when your prescription is refilled.
8. If anyone instructs you to stop, hold or change your warfarin (Coumadin®) therapy.
9. If you are scheduled for a surgical, dental, or invasive procedure.
10. If you are pregnant or plan on becoming pregnant.
11. If you change from generic warfarin to brand name Coumadin® or Jentoven®
12. If you have any questions about your therapy.

IF YOU HAVE A MEDICAL EMERGENCY CALL 911