

WHAT WARFARIN IS AND WHAT IT DOES FOR YOU

Warfarin is an anticoagulation medication that helps prevent the formation of blood clots. It is commonly called a ‘blood thinner’. If your blood forms a clot, you could be at risk for heart attack, stroke, and other serious medical problems.

HOW TO TAKE WARFARIN

Always take your pills as directed by PCA Anticoagulation Service (ACS), **Do Not follow the directions on the Warfarin bottle**. The amount of warfarin each person needs is different. The dose is based on a blood test called the INR (International Normalized Ratio). The amount of medication you take may change, based on the blood test. It needs to be taken around the same time each day, usually in the evening.

Never skip a dose, and never take a double dose. If you miss a dose, take it as soon as you remember on that same day. If you don’t remember until the next day, please call PCA ACS for instructions. If this happens on a weekend or holiday, skip the missed dose and start again the next day. Mark the missing dose in a diary or calendar. A daily pillbox will help you keep track of your dose.

Your body’s response to warfarin can be affected by your diet, environment, physical well-being, and other medications or herbal supplement products you use.

Get the prescription refilled before you run out of the medicine completely.

BLOOD TESTS

Your clinic decides how much warfarin you need by testing your blood. The test measures how fast your blood is clotting

and lets the ACS know if your dosage should be changed. If your blood test is too high, you may be at risk for bleeding problems. If it is too low, you may be at risk for forming clots. Your doctor has decided on an INR range that is right for you.

When you first start taking warfarin you may need your blood checked more frequently. Once the blood test is in the target range and remains stable on the ordered dose, this test is done less often. Because your dose is based on the INR blood test, it is very important that you get your blood tested on the date you are told or around that date if your INR has been stable

POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS

Side effects while on warfarin may happen. Side effects can include bleeding. To lower the risk of bleeding, your blood warfarin levels will be kept within a range that is right for you. Even when your INR blood test is in range you might see a little bleeding like bruises on your body or slight gum bleeding when you brush your teeth. Some people may experience hair loss or skin rashes, but this is rare. If you notice something wrong that you feel may be caused by the medication, call your doctor.

Slight bleeding – you may notice from time to time:

- Gum bleeding while brushing teeth.
- Occasional nosebleed.
- Easy bruising.
- Bleeding after a minor cut that stops within a few minutes.
- Menstrual bleeding that is a little heavier than normal.

Major bleeding – call your doctor, or go to the hospital emergency room if you have any of the following:

- Red, dark, coffee or cola colored urine.

- Bowel movements that are red or black that looks like tar.
- Any bleeding that does not stop after 10 minutes of firm pressure

DIET WHILE ON WARFARIN

The foods you eat can affect how well warfarin works for you. High amounts of vitamin K might work against warfarin.

Keep your diet the same and avoid cooked spinach. If there are major changes in your diet, or if you are unable to eat for several days, for whatever reason, call the Anticoagulation Service.

Illness can affect your INR blood test and your warfarin dose. If you become sick with a fever, the flu, or an infection, call your doctor and then the Anticoagulation Service. Also, call if you have diarrhea or vomiting lasting more than 1 day.

LIMIT ALCOHOL

Alcohol can affect your warfarin dosage but it does not mean you must avoid all alcohol. Serious problems can occur with alcohol and warfarin when you drink more than 2 drinks a day or when you change your usual intake pattern. Be careful on special occasions or holidays, and drink only what you usually would on any regular day of the week.

MEDICATIONS

Warfarin can interact with foods, other drugs, vitamins or herbal supplements. Please provide the Anticoagulation Service with a complete list of everything you are taking. Please update the ACS when you have any change in vitamins, herbal supplements, discontinue any medication or begin any new medications including temporary medicine like antibiotics.

**In this booklet, the term “doctor” is used. It can mean doctor, nurse, nurse practitioner, physician assistant, or other health care provider.*

SAFETY PRECAUTIONS WHILE ON WARFARIN

Carry a medication ID card, mark your license with a note that you take Warfarin or wear a medical alert bracelet, in case of emergency. Any doctor, dentist, or emergency medical care provider who treats you should know that you are taking warfarin.

It is very important to know that you can be bleeding and not see any blood. For example, you could fall and hit your head, and bleeding could occur under the skin.

Call your doctor or go to the hospital immediately if you have taken a bad fall, even if you are not bleeding.

To prevent injury indoors:

- Be very careful using knives and scissors.
- Use an electric razor.
- Use a soft toothbrush.
- Use waxed dental floss
- Do not use toothpicks.
- Wear shoes or non-skid slippers in the house.
- Take care trimming your toenails.
- Do not trim corns or calluses yourself.

To prevent injury outdoors:

- Always wear shoes.
- Wear gloves when using sharp tools.
- Avoid activities and sports that can easily hurt you.
- Wear gardening gloves when doing yard work.

WARNING!!! Doctors warn against taking warfarin if you are pregnant or planning to get pregnant. Warfarin may cause birth defects or bleeding that may harm or even lead to the death of your unborn child.

Welcome to PCA Anticoagulation Service!

Per your doctor's request, you will be or have been referred to PCA (Pacific Cardiovascular Associates) Anticoagulation Service (ACS) for monitoring of your anticoagulation therapy. During your enrollment in PCA ACS you can expect the following:

- To have your next lab draw date based on the most current result of your PT/INR. This may include having daily lab tests, a test every four weeks, and anything in-between.
- It can take up to two business days to contact you with your normal lab results, we call abnormal results first. Continue your same/instructed Warfarin dose until new directions are given. If you had your blood drawn and you have not heard from PCA ACS within two *business* days (Mon-Fri) please call us at (949) 325-0730 for INR results and Warfarin dosing instructions.
- It is very important to report **ALL** medication changes to the service as soon as changes occur. This includes any changes in prescription and over the counter medications or supplements.
- Please make sure to notify all doctors, dentists, and other healthcare professionals that you are on Coumadin (Warfarin).
- Report any major changes in your diet to the clinic. This includes changes such as weight loss (planned or unplanned), changes in dark green leafy vegetable intake, use of Ensure or Boost type of nutritional drinks or other dietary supplements, and any other major changes in your diet.
- Please have your pharmacy contact us directly for any Coumadin (Warfarin) refills. They can fax or send electronically (ERx) all refill requests to (949) 257-1182.



**Pacific Cardiovascular Associates
Medical Group, Inc.**

Anticoagulation Service

Phone: (949) 325-0730

Fax: (949) 257-1182

Website: www.pcacardiology.com