

While Traveling

- Consult with your healthcare provider prior to travel.
- Take an adequate supply of medications with you. Carry medication **with** you, not in your luggage.
- Take anticoagulant medication at the same time each day.
- Maintain a consistent diet.
- If you require health/dental care while traveling inform your healthcare provider you are on anticoagulants.

Other Notes

1. If you miss a single dose of anticoagulant medication, take it as soon as you remember to take it, up to 24 hours after missing the dose.
2. If you miss multiple doses or if more than 24 hours elapses since you forgot to take your dose of anticoagulant medication, contact your healthcare provider.
3. Keep all medications out of reach of children.

When to Contact Your Healthcare Provider

Important signs of bleeding indicating that you need to report to or call your healthcare provider:

- Bleeding from your nose or a cut that does not stop within 5-10 minutes.
- Increased bleeding from gums or teeth with brushing.
- Blood seen with coughing or vomiting.
- Increased bleeding during menstrual periods or unexpected vaginal bleeding.
- Urine dark brown or red in color.
- Bowel movements which are black or red.
- Difficulty breathing at rest or with mild activity, dizziness or prolonged headaches.

If you fall or obtain a blow to your head or body, contact your healthcare provider. Internal bleeding could occur without you being aware of a problem.

Check with your healthcare provider if you plan to participate in sports or physical activities which could result in a serious fall or injury.

Inform all healthcare providers that you are taking anticoagulants.

Glossary

Anticoagulant - A medication which interferes with the blood clotting process.

International Normalized Ratio (INR) - A standardized method to measure the amount of time it takes for blood to clot.

Vitamin K - A vitamin that aids in blood clotting. It is important to keep your diet balanced.

Warfarin - Generic name of the most common oral anticoagulant (brand name is Coumadin®).

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If you think you may have a medical emergency, call your doctor or 911 immediately.



Anticoagulant Information

Introduction

This pamphlet is to guide you in understanding the basics of anticoagulation medication and treatment. If you have any questions about your medication or do not understand something in this pamphlet, please ask your healthcare provider.

What Are Anticoagulants?

Anticoagulants are medications that slow down the body's ability to make blood clots. These medications are sometimes called blood thinners. Anticoagulants are available in the following forms: intravenous (in the vein), injections under the skin, and pills.

Anticoagulants can be used to treat or prevent several medical conditions. Some of the common conditions are:

- Blood clot in a vein (DVT, phlebitis)
- Blood clot in the lung (pulmonary embolus)
- Blood clot in an artery in the brain (stroke or transient ischemic attack - TIA)
- Abnormal heart rhythm (such as atrial fibrillation)
- Blockage of an artery in the heart which can cause a heart attack
- Heart valve replacement
- Total joint replacement

What Is Warfarin?

Warfarin is one of the most frequently prescribed oral anticoagulants. It is currently available under the brand name Coumadin[®]. Warfarin tablets are color coded and come in different strengths. The strength in milligrams (mg) is stamped on one side of the tablet. The tablet also has an indented line in the middle so it can be broken in half for dosage adjustment.

How Much Do I Take?

The dosage of Warfarin is specific to each patient. It is regulated according to the results of a blood test called the International Normalized Ratio (INR). The INR measures how quickly the blood is clotting and suggests if your dosage of Warfarin should be adjusted.

The INR will be done frequently at the beginning of your anticoagulant therapy. Once your dosage has been established, you will not need the test as often. Your health care provider will determine when you need the blood test. Typically this will be once a month or it could be more often.

What Affects Anticoagulant Therapy

Nutrition

What you eat may affect how much anticoagulation medication you need.

Some general nutrition dietary guidelines are:

1. Maintain the same diet and eat the same types of foods—unless otherwise instructed.
2. Consult your doctor regarding any diet changes.
3. Avoid “binge” and crash diets.
4. Consult your doctor before taking any vitamins, mineral supplements, or new medications.
5. An excess of foods high in vitamin K could have an effect on your anticoagulation:

Limit to 1 serving per day (1 cup raw or 1/2 cup cooked):

Spinach	Turnip greens	Cucumber peel
Broccoli	Brussels sprouts	Green scallion
Cabbage	Mustard greens	

Avoid eating parsley, kale, seaweed, and green tea.

6. Alcoholic beverages may alter the effect of anticoagulants (eg. Warfarin). Consume alcoholic beverages only if allowed by your healthcare provider and limit the quantity according to the guidelines provided by your healthcare provider.

Medications

Other medications frequently will alter the effects of Warfarin. This includes a large number of antibiotics and over-the-counter medications. Be certain that the healthcare provider who is prescribing your Warfarin is aware of any other medications you are taking. Avoid taking medications containing aspirin, unless specifically ordered by your healthcare provider.

Safety Precautions

Things that will reduce the risk of bleeding include:

- Don't go barefoot.
- Wear gloves when gardening.
- Use an electric razor.
- Be careful when handling sharp objects.
- Use proper fingernail and toenail care.
- Don't change dose or stop taking your anticoagulant medication unless your healthcare provider tells you to do so.
- Take medications at the same time each day.

Carry a form of identification indicating you are taking an anticoagulant.

- Medical Alert bracelet
- Wallet card

NOTIFY YOUR HEALTHCARE PROVIDER IF YOU BECOME PREGNANT OR ARE ATTEMPTING TO BECOME PREGNANT. ANTICOAGULANT PILLS MAY HARM A FETUS. HOWEVER, ANTICOAGULANT INJECTIONS ARE SAFE IN PREGNANCY.