

# Diet and Warfarin



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY  
WEXNER MEDICAL CENTER

Your doctor has prescribed the medicine warfarin (brand names Coumadin and Jantoven) for you. It is an anticoagulant (blood thinner) that makes your blood clot more slowly to prevent dangerous problems, such as a stroke.

Your doctor can tell how well warfarin is working from a blood test, called international normalized ratio (INR). The test shows how quickly your blood clots.

There are some foods, including those rich in vitamin K, alcohol, some dietary and herbal supplements, as well as some medicines, that can affect the way warfarin works in your body.

## Foods rich in vitamin K

To help warfarin work well, it is important to keep your vitamin K intake as consistent as possible.

- A **large increase in vitamin K** can lower your INR to cause dangerous clotting in your blood.
- A **large decrease in vitamin K** can raise your INR to make it harder for your blood to clot. This could cause you to bleed too much. You do not need to avoid or follow a diet low in vitamin K while taking warfarin.

To keep your INR stable and within your recommended range:

- **Take warfarin exactly as your doctor directed.**
- **Have your INR checked regularly.** The test is done at least monthly.
- **Keep your vitamin K intake consistent week to week.** For example, you may plan to eat 1/2 cup of foods rich in vitamin K per day. If you like to eat these foods and eat them often, you can eat them, but be consistent.
  - Do not make any major changes in your intake of foods rich in vitamin K. For example, if you eat a spinach salad every day, do not stop eating it entirely.
  - Discuss vitamin supplements with your doctor. Do not take more than 1 supplement that contains vitamin K.

Foods Rich in Vitamin K		
Food	Food Amount	Vitamin K (mcg)
Kale, cooked	1/2 cup	531
Parsley, raw	1/2 cup	492
Spinach, cooked	1/2 cup	444
Mustard greens, cooked	1/2 cup	415
Collards, cooked	1/2 cup	387
Swiss chard, cooked	1/2 cup	287
Turnip greens, cooked	1/2 cup	265



Foods Rich in Vitamin K		
Food	Food Amount	Vitamin K (mcg)
Swiss chard, raw	1/2 cup	150
Brussels sprouts, cooked	1/2 cup	150
Broccoli, cooked	1/2 cup	110
Cabbage, cooked	1/2 cup	82
Collards, raw	1/2 cup	79
Brussels sprouts, raw	1/2 cup	78
Spinach, raw	1/2 cup	73
Mustard greens, raw	1/2 cup	72
Turnip greens, raw	1/2 cup	69
Endive, raw	1/2 cup	58
Kale, raw	1/2 cup	57
Broccoli, raw	1/2 cup	45
Tuna, canned in oil	3 ounces	37
Cabbage, raw	1/2 cup	34
Prunes, stewed	1/2 cup	33
Romaine lettuce, raw	1/2 cup	29
Green leaf lettuce	1/2 cup	23
Peas, cooked	1/2 cup	19
Avocado	1/2 cup	16
Asparagus	1/2 cup	16
Blackberries, raw	1/2 cup	15
Blueberries, raw	1/2 cup	15



Visit the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Nutrient Database at <https://ndb.nal.usda.gov/ndb> for vitamin K content of common foods.

**If you greatly increase or decrease foods rich in Vitamin K in your diet, let your doctor know right away.**

If your INR levels are hard to manage, meet with a dietitian to review the vitamin K content of your diet.

## Cranberries

Moderate amounts of cranberry products are fine, such as one, 8-ounce glass of cranberry juice a day. **Avoid eating or drinking large amounts** of cranberries, cranberry juice, and cranberry supplements while taking warfarin.

## Grapefruit

**Do not eat grapefruit or drink grapefruit juice** while taking warfarin.

## Alcohol

**Alcohol should be avoided.** Talk to your doctor if you have questions.

## Dietary and herbal supplements

- Taking herbal supplements may cause problems and affect how your body uses warfarin.

### **Avoid these herbal supplements:**

- |                  |                          |                           |
|------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| › Alfalfa        | › Forskolin              | › Meililot (sweet clover) |
| › Arnica         | › Garlic                 | › Pau d'arco              |
| › Bilberry       | › Ginger                 | › Red clover              |
| › Butchers broom | › Ginkgo biloba          | › St. John's wort         |
| › Cat's claw     | › Ginseng                | › Sweet woodruff          |
| › Coenzyme Q10   | › Goldenseal             | › Turmeric                |
| › Dong quai      | › Horse chestnut         | › Willow bark             |
| › Echinacea      | › Inositol hexaphosphate | › Wheat grass             |
| › Feverfew       | › Licorice               |                           |

- Use of herbs in cooking, such as garlic and ginger, are safe to eat while you are on warfarin.
- Some vitamin and mineral supplements in large doses can affect your body's response to warfarin, such as taking more than 800 units of vitamin E a day.
- It is safe to take an adult multivitamin each day that contains vitamin K, but do not take other supplements that contain vitamin K, such as a Viactiv calcium supplement.
- **Always talk to your doctor before starting, taking, or changing any herbal supplements, herbal teas, or dietary supplements.**

## Liquid nutritional supplements

Liquid nutritional drinks like Ensure, Boost, and Glucerna have a low amount of vitamin K added to 8-ounce bottles. If you drink several of these bottles each day, your vitamin K level may increase and require your warfarin dose to be changed.

**If you use these nutritional drinks, tell your doctor that you are taking them since it may affect your warfarin dose.**

## Medicines

Some medicines can affect how warfarin works. Ask your doctor or pharmacist before you start or stop any medicine, especially the following:

- Another anticoagulant (blood thinner) medicine
- Medicines to treat depression or anxiety
- Antibiotics
- NSAID pain or arthritis medicines - check labels of over the counter medicines to find out if they contain a NSAID
- Steroid medicine