Warfarin (WAR-far-in)

Warfarin is part of a group of medicines called anticoagulants. ANTI means against and COAGULANT refers to the clotting of blood. This medicine helps to prevent new harmful blood clots from forming in your blood vessels, lungs, and around the heart, and can also keep existing blood clots from getting worse. Warfarin itself will not dissolve blood clots (your body will dissolve clots naturally.) Sometimes, warfarin is called a blood thinner, but it does not actually thin your blood.

Brand Name(s): Coumadin, Jantoven

- Your reason for taking this medicine: __________________________
- Your goal INR range: _________

Reasons your doctor may decide you should NOT use this medicine:

- If you have had an allergic reaction to warfarin.
- If you are not able to have a blood test (called INR) checked regularly or are not able to follow instructions about dosing changes given by your health care provider. You must have these blood tests checked regularly in order to take warfarin safely.
- If you have a history of falling or are at risk of falling.
- If you have liver disease, kidney disease, high blood pressure, or any condition that may cause uncontrolled bleeding (such as a stomach ulcer or hemophilia).

More on next page ➔

Learn more about your health care.
If you are pregnant or may become pregnant. Using this medicine if you are pregnant can harm your unborn baby. Discuss acceptable birth control options while you are on warfarin with your doctor. If you think you have become pregnant, or plan to become pregnant while using this medicine, tell your doctor right away.

Ask your doctor about using this medicine if you are having surgery. Usually, you should not use this medicine if you are having surgery on your kidney, liver, spleen, heart, brain, spine, or a major surgery that will leave you with large, open wounds. Your doctor may instruct you to change to another medicine in the days before and after the surgery. Talk to your doctor right away if you have any of the reasons listed above.

How to Use This Medicine:

Oral Tablet
- Warfarin tablets can be many different shapes based on the manufacturer, BUT each milligram (mg) strength comes in just one color. For example, a 5 mg tablet will always be peach. Each time you fill your prescription make sure the tablet color matches the strength you are prescribed.

- Take warfarin at the same time each day. The best time of day to take your warfarin is the time when you will remember to take it every day. You may take warfarin with or without food.

- If you have less than a two week supply of medicine, ask your doctor for a new prescription.

Dose
- Your health care provider will tell you the amount (dose) of warfarin to take. Your dose may need to be changed several times in order to find out what works best for you. This medicine is different from other medicines since you may be told to use different amounts different days of the week.
  - For example, a person may be told to take 5 mg daily, except take 2.5 mg on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.
• You should always know your current dose. Tell your prescriber the strength of warfarin tablet(s) you have available and ask how much warfarin to take. You should read the dose and instructions back to your prescriber to make sure you understand them. Your current instructions should include the current date so you will not confuse them with older past instructions. Your current dose instructions may be different than what is on your prescription bottle.

• It is advised to keep your current dated instructions close to your medicine and read them to check your dose each time before taking your medicine.

**Understanding INR Blood Tests:**

• INR stands for International Normalized Ratio and is a calculation of how long it takes for your blood to clot. A normal INR for someone who does not take warfarin is 1.0. The higher the INR measurement, the longer it takes for your blood to clot. It is normal for your INR measurement to change slightly from time to time.

• Warfarin will cause the INR to increase, which prevents blood clots from forming easily.

• Based on the medical condition being treated, your doctor will decide your goal INR range, usually somewhere between 2.0-3.5. For example, your doctor may determine a goal INR between 2.0-3.0.

• The INR lab test will show how sensitive you are to the medicine and helps guide if your dose needs changed. The amount of warfarin you need to reach your goal INR may be very different from another person who takes warfarin. This is because the dose you need is based on many factors such as genetics, age, certain medical conditions, activity level, diet, other medicines, etc.

**Blood tests are the only way to measure the balance between bleeding and clotting. This is why it is very important to keep your appointments with your lab, doctor, or anticoagulation clinic.**
- At first, your blood will be drawn frequently (such as every couple days) to check your INR results. After you take warfarin for a while, the blood test will be ordered less often (once your dose is stable and your INR is in goal range, the test may possibly be drawn every 4-6 weeks).

- **If your INR result is below your goal range**, your blood is clotting too quickly and you may be at increased risk for new clots to form or existing clots to worsen.

- **If your INR result is above your goal range**, it is taking too long for your blood to clot and you may be at increased risk for bleeding and bruising problems.

- **Call your health care provider for your test results and dose instructions if you are not contacted within 24 hours of your INR blood test.**

**If a dose is missed:**

- If you miss a dose or forget to use your medicine, if it is still the same day, take it as soon as you can. If it is the next day, skip the missed dose and take your normal dose. Write down the date of any missed dose to notify your health care provider when you have your next INR blood test.

- Contact your health care provider if you miss two or more doses in a row.

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If your health care provider told you to stop taking warfarin until your next INR blood test, contact them if you don’t hear anything within 24 hours of the test to find out your new dose or when to restart the medicine.
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**How to Store and Dispose of This Medicine:**

- Store the medicine in a closed container at room temperature, away from heat, moisture, and direct light. Do not store in the bathroom.

- Ask your health care provider or pharmacist how to dispose of unused tablets safely. Do not flush down the toilet.

- Keep all medicine away from children and never share your medicine with anyone.
Your Diet and Warfarin:

It is important to carefully follow your health care provider’s instructions about any special diet. The amount of vitamin K in your diet can affect the amount (dose) of warfarin you need to take. Your medicine dose must be balanced with your diet to give the best drug effect.

- You do not have to follow a diet low in vitamin K. In fact, not getting enough vitamin K can lead to weak bones and other problems. It is more important to eat foods with vitamin K in about the same amount from week to week.

- Eating more or less of foods with vitamin K than you normally do may change the way warfarin works in your body and may increase your risk of bleeding or blood clots. If you greatly increase or decrease these foods in your diet, let your health care provider know immediately.

- For your information, some foods that have a high amount of vitamin K are asparagus, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, kale, green leafy vegetables (such as collards, turnip greens, mustard greens, spinach, and salad greens), plums, rhubarb, and certain vegetable oils (such as soybean oil and canola oil). For a more complete list, ask your health care provider or dietitian. For more information, ask for the patient education handout, Diet and Warfarin (Coumadin).

- Avoid drinking or eating a large amount of cranberry juice or cranberry products.

- Avoid or limit drinking alcohol while you are using this medicine.

Warfarin and Taking Other Medicines:

- Tell your doctor, pharmacist, or nurse what prescription and nonprescription medicines you are taking. Warfarin interacts with many other medicines (including prescription and non-prescription medicines, antibiotics, vitamins, and herbal supplements).

- You may be at increased risk for bleeding if you are also taking any of these medicines with your warfarin. In some patients, your doctor may approve using the two medicines together:
  - clopidogrel (Plavix)
  - dipyridamole (Persantine)
  - prasugrel (Effient)
  - ticagrelor (Brilinta)
  - ticlopidine (Ticlid)
Prescription and non-prescription pain and arthritis or cold-relief products that contain a medicine listed below can increase your risk of bleeding.

- **Nonsteroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDS):**
  - celecoxib (Celebrex)
  - diclofenac (Voltaren)
  - etodolac (Lodine)
  - fenoprofen (Nalfon)
  - ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil)
  - indomethacin (Indocin)
  - ketoprofen (Orudis)
  - meloxicam (Mobic)
  - nabumetone (Relafen)
  - naproxen (Aleve, Naprosyn)
  - piroxicam (Feldene)
  - sulindac (Clinoril)

- **Aspirin** – Although a one a day aspirin may be prescribed to patients who are also taking warfarin, you should not take aspirin unless your doctor has approved using the two medicines together.

**Be sure to ALWAYS check with your doctor or pharmacist ANY TIME a new medicine is added or stopped or a dose is changed.**

The list below contains some medicines that may affect INR levels which can place you at an increased risk of bleeding or clotting. There are many other medicines, prescriptions, over-the-counter medicines, antibiotics, vitamins, and herbal supplements, not listed here that can affect your warfarin therapy.

- Many antibiotics
- Some heart medicines: amiodarone (Cordarone), propafenone (Rythmol)
- Birth control pills
- Thyroid pills
- cholestyramine (Questran)
- cimetidine (Tagamet)
- cimetidine (Tagamet)
- colestipol (Colestid)
- disulfiram (Antabuse)
- fluconazole (Diflucan)
- gemfibrozil (Lopid)
- metronidazole (Flagyl)
- phenobarbital
- trimethoprim/sulfamethoxazole (Bactrim)
**Possible Side Effects While Using This Medicine:**

When taking this medicine, you are at a higher risk for bleeding (even when your INR is in goal range, but risk can greatly increase when your INR is above your goal). You will also need to watch for signs of blood clot if you have too little medicine (often when INR is below goal range).

**Tell your doctor right away if you have any of the following:**

- Blood in vomit, vomit that looks like coffee grounds
- Bowel movements that are red or black like tar
- Coughing up blood
- Frequent bleeding from gums
- Frequent nose bleeds
- Pink or brown colored urine
- Bruises that are worsening or do not appear to be healing
- Bleeding from cuts that do not stop with pressure
- Heavy menstrual bleeding or a period that lasts much longer than normal
- Nausea, vomiting or diarrhea that lasts more than 2 days
- Confusion, dizziness, unusual headaches, or fainting
- Purple discoloration of toes or soles of your feet
- Tiredness, fever, chills, sore throat, itching rash or mouth sores
- Allergic reactions: Itching or hives, swelling in your face or hands, swelling or tingling in your mouth or throat, chest tightness, trouble breathing
- Possible signs of clot in lung: chest pain, shortness of breath, trouble breathing, fast heart rate, coughing, or fever
- Possible signs of clot in arm or leg: new arm, leg or back pain, swelling, redness, warmth, or tenderness
- Possible signs of clot in heart: chest pain, shortness of breath, cold, clammy skin or sweating, nausea and vomiting
- Possible signs of stroke: numbness, tingling or weakness (often one-sided), problems with movement, swallowing, or speech
If you notice other side effects that you think are caused by this medicine, tell your doctor.

Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects. You may report side effects to FDA at 1-800-FDA-1088.

**Special Bleeding Precautions While Using This Medicine:**

- You may bleed and bruise more easily and it may take bleeding longer to stop and bruises longer to heal while you are using this medicine. Stay away from rough sports or other situations where you could be bruised, cut, injured, or fall. Gently brush teeth with a soft toothbrush and use waxed dental floss. Be careful when using sharp objects, including razors (electric razor preferred) and fingernail clippers. Avoid picking your nose. If you need to blow your nose, blow it gently.

- **Report any falls or blows to the head to your doctor right away (even if you feel fine) or seek emergency evaluation if you are unable to reach your doctor.**

- **Report to your doctor right away if you have vomit that is bloody or that looks like coffee grounds or seek emergency evaluation if you are unable to reach your doctor.**

- Tell all your doctors, dentists, nurses, and pharmacists that you are on warfarin. Carry a card in your wallet or purse that shows you take warfarin. You may want to consider purchasing a MedicAlert necklace or bracelet if you are going to be taking warfarin for a long time to let any emergency caregivers know that you are using warfarin.

The information above is only a brief report about the medicine. This medicine should come with a Medication Guide. If you do not receive one, ask your pharmacist. Product information should be thoroughly reviewed for more complete details.

Adapted from 2013 Truven Health Analytics Inc., Micromedex CareNotes® System.