

Blood thinning drugs (anti-coagulants)

This handout explains what blood-thinning drugs do, how to take them, when to get your blood tested, and when to call the doctor. It also describes possible drug-drug, drug-herb and drug-food interactions.

Do you need warfarin (Coumadin)

- If you are at risk for blood clots, your doctor may want you to take warfarin (Coumadin)
- You may need to take it only for a short time, like after surgery
- You may need to take it for a long time

How to take it

- Warfarin (Coumadin) is a powerful blood thinning drug
- Take it the way your doctor tells you to take it
 - The same amount each day
 - The same time each day
- Know what to do if you miss a dose
 - Do NOT take 2 doses to make up for a missed dose
 - Ask your doctor for a plan if you miss a dose
- Warfarin is a drug you keep taking even after you feel better
- Carry medical identification (ID) or wear medical alert jewelry that says you take a blood thinning drug

Be careful taking other drugs with warfarin (Coumadin)

- Always tell your doctor what drugs you are taking
- Always tell any new doctor that you are taking warfarin
- **Some drugs increase the effect of warfarin**
- **Some drugs make warfarin not work as well**
- Always ask your doctor before taking a drug you buy at the drug store
- **Always ask your doctor before taking an herbal product or food supplement along with warfarin**
 - Common products to watch out for
 - Bromelains
 - Coenzyme Q10
 - Danshen
 - Dong quai
 - Garlic
 - Gingko biloba
 - St. John's wort

Diet: watch out for foods with vitamin K

- Vitamin K changes the way warfarin works
- Ask your doctor if you can eat food that contains vitamin K
 - Liver

- Green leafy vegetables
- Broccoli
- Cauliflower
- If you eat food with vitamin K, try to eat the same amount every day
 - That way it will have the same effect on your drug level
- If you change your diet, you may need to change how much warfarin you take (ask your doctor)

Get your blood tested

- Get a blood test called a Pro-time, PT, or INR when your doctor tells you to
- You will need to have your blood tested at least once a month
- You may be able to test your blood at home with a special kit
 - Your doctor or nurse will need to train you how to do this
 - You will need to keep a record to show your doctor or nurse
 - You will need to check the testing machine to make sure it is working well

Call your doctor if you have

- High fever
- Stomach pain or swelling
- Blood in your
 - Eyes or nose
 - Urine or stool
 - Throw up or vomit
- Other bleeding problems
 - Gums bleed when brushing teeth
 - Bleed a lot when you cut yourself
 - Bleed a lot during your monthly period (menses)
 - Stools look black, like tar
- New bruises or purple spots on your skin
- Little red spots on your skin
- Back pain or headache
- Blurry eyesight
- Dizzy or fainting spells
- Loss of appetite or feel sick to your stomach
- Numb feeling in hands, feet, or face
- Shortness of breath or chest pain

The content in this letter is intended as general information and may not apply to you or your condition. Talk to your doctor about how to best use this information and how to take care of your medical condition. This information is not intended to provide or replace professional medical advice or services.
