

Warfarin Patient Information

Information for Patients taking Warfarin
who are dosed by Austin Pathology



What is Warfarin?

Warfarin is an anticoagulant – a medication that treats or prevents harmful blood clots. It is sometimes called a ‘blood thinner’. It is taken orally as a tablet(s).

How is Warfarin taken?

It is important to take the correct dose of warfarin to ensure that you minimise your risk of blood clots and your risk of bleeding. Everyone needs a different dose of warfarin depending on their body, diet, medical problems, and medications. Your warfarin dose may change over time as these change.

Warfarin tablets should be taken once a day, usually at about 6pm or dinner time. Try to take warfarin at the same time each day.

There are 2 brands of warfarin – Coumadin and Marevan. Austin patients are generally supplied with Coumadin. You should always use the same brand that you were started on.

The Coumadin brand comes in 3 strengths, each with a different colour and milligram (mg) dose. By taking a particular combination of these tablets, you will be able to have the warfarin dose that you need.

1mg Light brown colour

2mg Purple colour

5mg Green colour

The INR blood test will be used to determine the warfarin dose that you need. The lower the INR result, the more likely the blood is to clot. The higher the result, the less likely the blood is to clot, but bleeding is more likely. You will be told what INR range is required for you. A common INR range is 2-3.

How will I know what dose to take?

When you first start warfarin, you will be required to have regular INR blood tests. Please try to get these tests done as early in the day as possible.

You will be called during that day by a Warfarin Clinic staff member to advise you of your INR result, what dose you need to take, and when to have your next INR blood test.

Please remember to provide us with up-to-date contact details so we can reach you.

If your dose has been stable for some time, you may receive a letter in the mail to advise you of your dose, rather than being called. Please let us know if you would prefer to be called.

If you plan to travel, please contact the Warfarin Clinic on 9496 3606 so that we can discuss arrangements for your INR blood tests with you.

What if I forget to take a dose?

If you remember within 3 hours of when you were meant to take the dose, you should take it.

If it has been more than 3 hours since you were meant to take the dose, miss that dose and take your normal dose the next time it is due. Do not try to catch up by doubling your dose.

When you next have your INR blood test, mention that a dose was missed.

What if my INR is high?

The warfarin clinic will advise you on how to adjust your warfarin dose. There is a risk of bleeding with a high INR, so sometimes it may be necessary to take a liquid medication called vitamin K to reduce the risk of bleeding.

If we think you need this medication, we will make special arrangements for you. If you have a very high INR and/or are bleeding, you may need to present to the Emergency Department for additional treatment.

What problems can occur with Warfarin?

- **Bleeding:**
This can vary from easy bruising to major bleeding. Certain other blood thinning medications can increase the bleeding risk with warfarin so check with your pharmacist or doctor before starting any new medications. If you are injured (e.g. after falling) you may have increased bleeding with warfarin. **If you are concerned about bleeding, you should seek medical attention.**
- **Surgery/procedures:**
Warfarin may need to be stopped prior to certain procedures, and special arrangements made. Check with your doctor/dentist.
- **Sickness or change in medications (e.g. antibiotics, vitamins, herbs):**
These can affect what dose of warfarin you need. Therefore you may need to have an earlier INR blood test.
- **Pregnancy:**
Warfarin must not be taken by pregnant women due to serious risks to the unborn child.
- **Skin necrosis (very rare):**
Seek medical attention if you develop a painful rash

Diet

You should be able to enjoy your usual foods and drinks with warfarin. Note that big changes in diet (e.g. excessive consumption of green leafy vegetables) can affect your warfarin dose. Consuming more than 1-2 standard drinks per day of alcohol can affect your warfarin dosing.

Dosing record

Date	INR result	Number of tablets			Total mg per day	Tick when taken
		1mg (brown)	2mg (purple)	5mg (green)		

Further Information

If you have any questions regarding this information, please contact:

Austin Pathology Warfarin Clinic

Phone 9496 3606

Monday to Friday 8:30am -5pm

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