

A Patient's Guide to Warfarin (Coumadin®)

- **What does warfarin do?**

- Warfarin (Coumadin®) is sometimes called an “anticoagulant” or a “blood thinner”
- Warfarin stops blood from clotting too quickly or in the wrong place
 - Clots can get stuck in your blood vessels and cause medical problems. Warfarin prevents this from happening

You are taking warfarin for:

- **What does “INR” mean and what does it have to do with warfarin?**

- INR is a blood test your doctor will check frequently when you are on warfarin
 - The INR can tell your doctor whether your dose of warfarin is right for you
- Be sure to keep your appointments to check your INR
- Your doctor will determine a “target INR” that is ideal for you based on the reason you are taking warfarin and your other medical conditions
 - He or she may change your warfarin dose based on your INR

Your target INR is:

- **How should I take my warfarin?**

- Take your warfarin as prescribed by your doctor
 - Do not change how much you take unless your doctor tells you to do so
- Take your warfarin at the same time every day
 - If you miss a dose, take it as soon as you remember on that day
 - If you do not remember until the next day, do not “double up”. Only take your dose for that day and be sure to inform your doctor of the missed dose as soon as possible

- **What are possible side effects of warfarin?**

- While on warfarin, you may notice an increase in “minor bleeding”, such as:
 - Bleeding gums when you brush your teeth
 - Slight nose bleeds
 - Some increase in bruising
- If you notice any of the following, call your doctor or go to the emergency room right away:
 - bleeding that will not stop
 - bruising that is excessive
 - red- or black-colored bowel movements (stool)
 - vomiting blood
 - red- or dark brown-colored urine
 - unusually heavy vaginal bleeding
- Report any falls or injuries to your healthcare provider immediately

- **Will warfarin interact with any of my medications or food?**
 - Warfarin has many interactions with other medications
 - Always tell your medical and dental care providers that you are taking warfarin
 - If you need to have a procedure done, be sure the doctor or dentist knows you are on warfarin
 - He or she may have special instructions for you
 - Always fill all of your prescriptions at the same pharmacy so your pharmacist can check for interactions between them
 - Over-the-counter (“OTC”) products such as pain relievers and cold medicine can also interact with warfarin
 - Ask your pharmacist or doctor which products are a good option
 - Never take herbal supplements or vitamins without discussing them first with your doctor. They may change your INR
 - Do not start a diet or change your eating habits without talking to your healthcare provider first
 - Warfarin interacts with foods that contain vitamin K. Green leafy vegetables such as spinach, broccoli, and kale often contain vitamin K, but there are many other sources of this vitamin. Make sure you eat similar amounts of these foods each week
 - Drinking alcohol can change your INR. Discuss alcohol consumption with your doctor.
- **If you have any questions about your warfarin or other medications, contact your healthcare provider or pharmacist**