

About Anticoagulation Therapy: The Medication

We use warfarin sodium tablets (brand name Coumadin®) as an anticoagulation agent to prevent your body from forming clots it does not need. Combined with your cardiac condition, these clots can cause serious medical problems. Warfarin is not used to treat your cardiac condition; rather we use it to prevent further complications. You should not feel any better or worse while on this medication.

Using the Anticoagulant

Warfarin is always taken once a day, no matter how much you take daily. We prefer you take your medication between 5 and 7 pm Most people take it with their evening meal. Since your dose is personalized, you may be taking a very different dose than a friend or a relative. We gauge the strength of your dose by its effectiveness using a lab test called the Prothrombin time, INR also known as a “Prottime,” or “INR.”

The INR

You will be tested regularly (at least monthly) while you are taking warfarin. The test is an International Normalization Ratio or INR. At first, the INRs will be done at least weekly until we find the proper dose for you. Regular INRs are critical in the effective use of warfarin. We will assign a range for the INR based on your cardiac condition, personal history and anticoagulation goal. Your medication will be adjusted accordingly and you will be given your next blood test date.

It is critical that you follow these instructions closely for safe and effective anticoagulation. You will be contacted after each blood test. If you are not contacted within 24 hours of your test, take your warfarin as previously directed and contact our office the next business day for instructions.

If circumstances prevent you from getting your INR on the recommended date (weather, vacation, conflicting appointments, etc.) get your INR checked the next possible date. If this is greater than one week from your appointed day please call us for instructions. We will work with you whenever possible so the anticoagulation therapy does not rule your life!

Factors that Affect Warfarin

Many outside influences alter the effectiveness of warfarin. Once you start your anticoagulation therapy you must contact us any time you start, stop or change dose of any other medication. We will need to recheck your INR to see if adjustments are necessary. Vitamin K (usually found in green, leafy vegetables) can also change the dose requirements of warfarin. If your diet changes radically, please let us know as soon as possible. Alcohol can also affect the dose requirement; binge drinking should be avoided at all times. If you miss your dose or accidentally take more than prescribed, contact our office for instructions. Do not try to catch up or hold your dose on your own.



What to Look Out for

Rarely, warfarin can cause a rash. If a rash develops within one to two weeks of initiating therapy, call us. Some bruising is normal with warfarin, but a bruise that continues to spread over 24 hours needs attention. Call us for instructions. Bleeding from the mouth or nose, blood in your urine or stool (blood in your stool can be red or black) or unusual pain or swelling should be brought to our attention immediately. Do not ever stop your warfarin or alter your dose without contacting us. This can lead to bigger problems than the one you are experiencing. Please bring any other concerns to our attention, we are here to help you any way we can.

Remember

- Take your medication and have your INR checked as recommended.
- Contact us with any medication changes, prescribed or over the counter.
- Consistency in diet and daily activity helps maintain your prescribed level.
- Contact our Anticoagulation Clinic with any questions or concerns you may have. We are here to help.
- Do not, ever, alter your dose without consulting our clinic.

Dedicated to New York

Cardiology Consultants of Westchester, P.C. is dedicated to providing area residents with world class heart care right in our neighborhood. Providing expertise in Anticoagulation is just one more example of our dedication to providing the best medical care possible to you and your family. Cardiology Consultants of Westchester together with Vascular Associates of Westchester and Primary Care & Cardiovascular Associates, is dedicated to improving the health of our patients by providing the highest quality cardiovascular care in a comfortable, compassionate environment. In addition, we are committed to contributing to the advancement of knowledge in the community through ongoing education and scientific inquiry.

