Your Guide to Anticoagulation Therapy
Welcome to the
UCSD Anticoagulation Clinic

Clinic Staff

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Contact Numbers

La Jolla Clinic  (858) 657-7020
Pharmacy Refill Fax  (619) 543-2390
Hillcrest Clinic  (858) 657-7020
Pharmacy Refill Fax  (619) 543-2390

Clinic Hours and Locations

Hillcrest:  330 Lewis Street, Suite 200 (on NW corner of 4th Ave)
Monday  12:00 pm – 4:00 pm
Tuesday  8:30 am – 12:00 pm
Wednesday  8:30 am – 4:00 pm

La Jolla:  9350 Campus Point Drive, LL-B (Perlman Medical Offices)
Thursday  7:30 am – 4:00 pm
Friday  7:30 am – 12:00 pm

***Always contact us if you***

- Have been hospitalized or in the emergency room
- Sustain a head injury (Call 911 first!)
- Experience any unexplained or continuous bleeding
- Have any medication change—prescription or over-the-counter
- Are sick (fever >100°, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, etc.) for more than 24 hours
- Are scheduled for a procedure before your next appointment
Warfarin (Coumadin®)  
What it is and What it Does

Warfarin and Coumadin® are two names for the same medicine. Warfarin is the generic name and Coumadin® is the brand name. The brand and generic products contain the same active ingredient and are available in a variety of strengths.

What is warfarin?

Warfarin is an anticoagulant ("anti" means against and "coagulation" means clotting). It slows down the clotting process and is therefore used to treat or prevent clots in the veins, arteries, lungs or heart.

Why have I been prescribed warfarin?

You have been prescribed warfarin in order to prevent the formation of harmful blood clots. You may have a health condition that predisposes your blood to clotting unnecessarily, such as:

- Atrial fibrillation (an irregular, rapid heartbeat)
- Heart valve replacement
- Certain genetic disorders

Or, you may have a history of blood clots, such as:

- Stroke (CVA)
- Deep vein thrombosis (DVT)
- Pulmonary embolism (PE)
- Heart attack (MI)

How does warfarin work?

Blood clotting is a complex process that involves enzymes called "clotting factors." The normal synthesis of clotting factors happens in the liver and requires vitamin K. Warfarin reduces the formation of clotting factors by interfering with the normal action of vitamin K.

Warfarin can begin to reduce blood clotting within 24 hours of the first dose, but it takes 10 – 14 days for warfarin to have its full effect.

Warfarin is an anticoagulant.  
It prevents the formation of harmful blood clots.  
I am taking warfarin for ___________________________.
How to Take Warfarin

Warfarin is taken once per day. It does not matter what time of day you take warfarin. However, in order to be consistent, you should take it at the same time each day. Warfarin can be taken with or without food, and it can be taken at the same time as most other medications.

You should always take warfarin exactly as directed by either your doctor or the Anticoagulation Clinic. Avoid skipping a dose and do not take a double dose. If you forget to take a dose, take it as soon as you remember, as long as it is the same day. Do not take a double dose in order to make up for the missed dose. If you either miss a dose or take too much warfarin, call the Anticoagulation Clinic for instructions.

Take warfarin at the same time every day as directed by the Anticoagulation Clinic.
Warfarin can be taken with food or other medications.
Never skip a dose or take a double dose.

Blood Tests

The Anticoagulation Clinic will decide how much warfarin you need by testing your blood regularly. The blood test that we will use is called the Prothrombin Time or INR (International Normalized Ratio). This test is done in the clinic each time you come in, using a small device similar to a blood glucose monitor. We will perform a fingerstick in order to obtain a drop of blood. The test takes only a few minutes to complete.

The INR is a reflection of how fast your blood clots. Based on your health history, the Anticoagulation Clinic and your physician will decide on a target range for your INR, and we will then adjust your warfarin dose in order to achieve that target range. It is very important that you get your INR checked as directed by the Anticoagulation Clinic in order to make sure that your INR does not get too high or too low.

When you first start taking warfarin, you will have your blood checked often while we assess how much warfarin you need. Once your INR reaches the target range and we have found the dose that is right for you, you will need to be tested less often, but still at regular intervals.

You will need to get your INR checked regularly as directed by the Anticoagulation Clinic.

My target INR range is: _______________________.

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www.anticoag.ucsd.edu
Possible Side Effects of Warfarin

Because warfarin reduces the formation of clots in your blood, the most common complication with taking warfarin is bleeding. In order to lower your risk of bleeding, we will monitor your INR in order to make sure it does not get too high. However, it is still possible that you will experience some minor bleeding, even while your INR is within the target range. Most people who take warfarin will notice one or more of these effects, and they are not considered dangerous. Some examples of minor bleeding include:

- Gums bleeding when you brush your teeth
- Occasional minor nosebleeds
- Easy bruising
- Menstrual bleeding that is a little heavier than usual
- Bleeding after a minor cut that takes longer to stop than usual

Major bleeding is an uncommon but serious side effect of warfarin. You should call the Anticoagulation Clinic, call your doctor, or go to the emergency room if you experience any of the following:

- Changes in the color of your urine or stool
  - Red or brown urine
  - Red or black/tarry stools
- Vomit that is red or looks like coffee grounds
- Coughing up red-tinged secretions
- Severe headache or stomachache
- Excessive bleeding from the gums or nose
- Excessive menstrual bleeding
- Bruises that appear with no explanation in unexpected places

If you sustain a serious fall or injury or hit your head at any time, go directly to the emergency room for evaluation.

| Minor bleeding is a possible side effect of warfarin and is not dangerous. |
| Major bleeding is an uncommon but serious side effect. Seek medical attention immediately. |
| Go to the emergency room right away if you are seriously injured or hit your head. |
Using Other Medications

Warfarin can change the way other medicines work and other medicines can also change the way warfarin works. It is very important to inform your doctor, pharmacist, and the Anticoagulation Clinic about all other medicines that you are taking, including other prescription medications, over-the-counter medicines, nutritional supplements, or herbal products.

Over-the-Counter Pain Medications

Medications you may use:
- Acetaminophen (Tylenol®): no more than 2000mg per day
  - 6 – 7 regular strength 325mg tablets
  - 4 extra strength 500mg tablets
  - 4 Vicodin® (5/500) tablets

Medications to avoid:
- Ibuprofen (Advil®, Motrin®, Nuprin®)
- Naproxen (Aleve®, Anaprox®, Naprosyn®)
- Aspirin (Ecotrin®, Bayer®), unless prescribed by your doctor
- Other products that may contain aspirin or aspirin-like products: Excedrin®, Alka-Seltzer®, Pepto-Bismol®

Vitamins

Multi-vitamins containing vitamin K are OK, but should be taken consistently

Herbal Products

Supplements that should be avoided due to the risk of interaction or increased bleeding, unless specifically recommended by your doctor:
- Danshen
- Garlic (capsules or tablets – garlic in food is okay)
- Ginkgo
- Ginseng
- Fish oil (capsules or tablets – fish as food is okay)
- Kava kava
- Omega-3 fatty acids
Using Other Medications

Prescription Medications

The following medications have a strong interaction with warfarin. You should notify the Anticoagulation Clinic immediately if you start or stop one of these medications.

Prescription medicines you **MUST** inform us about immediately:

**Antibiotics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INR ↑</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bactrim®/Septra ® (trimethoprim/sulfamethoxaxole)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flagyl®/metronidazole</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ery-Tab®/erythromycin</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Diflucan®/fluconazole</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vibramycin®/doxycycline</td>
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<tr>
<th>INR ↓</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dycill®/dicloxacillin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rifadin®/rifampin</td>
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**Cardiovascular Medications**

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<tr>
<th>INR ↑</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cordarone®/Pacerone®/amiodarone</td>
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**Anticonvulsants**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>INR ↑</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dilantin®/phenytoin</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>INR ↓</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tegretol®/carbamazepine</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Luminal®/phenobarbital</td>
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Always tell the Anticoagulation Clinic about the medicines and supplements you are taking.

Inform the Anticoagulation Clinic when you start taking any new medicines or stop taking any medicines.

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Diet for Warfarin Users

The foods that you eat can affect how warfarin works in your body. The most important thing to remember is to **eat what you normally eat** and not make any major changes in your diet. Do not add any vitamins or nutritional supplements to your diet without first checking with the Anticoagulation Clinic.

An important dietary measure that must be regular and consistent is your intake of vitamin K. Vitamin K is an important part of the blood clotting process that needs to balance your warfarin dose. Very high or low amounts of vitamin K intake through your diet may increase or decrease warfarin’s effect.

The highest amount of vitamin K is found in green leafy vegetables like broccoli, different kinds of lettuce, cabbage, and spinach. The main thing to remember is to **keep your diet consistent**. If you normally eat a salad every night for dinner, you can continue to do so: just keep it consistent.

Alcohol can affect your warfarin therapy, but you do not need to avoid alcohol altogether. We suggest that alcohol intake be limited to **1 drink per day** (4 oz wine, 1.5 oz hard liquor, 12 oz beer). Do not drink more than usual. Serious problems may occur with alcohol and warfarin when you drink more than 2 drinks a day or when you change your usual drinking pattern. Be wary during special occasions or holidays – drink only what you usually do on any day of the week.

In the past, it was thought that cranberry juice and products affects warfarin. However, this is false – it is okay to have cranberry (juices, muffins, supplements, etc.)

Please call the Anticoagulation Clinic if you are **unable to eat for several days** for whatever reason. Also call if you have any stomach problems such as vomiting or diarrhea that lasts for more than one day. These problems can affect your warfarin therapy.

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**Eat what you normally eat, but be consistent!**

**Call the Anticoagulation Clinic if you have stomach problems lasting more than 1 day.**
Vitamin K Content in Foods

Vegetables
- Asparagus (M)
- Avocado (M)
- Broccoli (H)
- Brussels Sprouts (H)
- Cabbage (H)
- Cabbage, Red (M)
- Collard Greens (H)
- Endive, raw (H)
- Green Scallion, raw (H)
- Kale, raw leaf (H)
- Lettuce (H)
- Mustard greens, raw (H)
- Nopales
- Parsley (H)
- Peas, green, cooked (M)
- Pickles, Dill (M)
- Seaweed/Nori
- Spinach, raw leaf (H)
- Swiss Chard (H)
- Turnip greens, raw (H)
- Watercress, raw (H)

Meal Supplements
- Ensure ®
- Boost ®
- Glucerna ®
- Slim Fast ®
- Carnation Instant Breakfast ®
- CLIF Bars ®
- Nepro ® Drinks

Other
- Green Tea (cold or hot)
- V8 ® Juices
- Vitamin Water

(M) = Medium
(H) = High

You do not have to stop eating these foods.
Eat them as often as you always have, but be consistent!

Foods to Avoid

Mango: has the potential to increase the potency of warfarin in an unpredictable way
Liver: goose liver contains very high amounts of vitamin K2 and may unpredictably lower your INR
How Taking Warfarin Changes My Life

Although warfarin is a medication with some potentially serious side effects, you may not need to make drastic changes in the way you live.

**Activity**

Exercising is important to your health, so stay active! If a sport or activity puts you at high risk for injury, simply use protection to keep yourself safe or try another activity. For example, use a helmet and gloves when you ride your bike.

**Diet**

Keep your diet balanced and consistent! Consume consistent amounts of foods that are high in Vitamin K. We will adjust the warfarin dose to your diet and lifestyle.

**Alcohol**

Alcohol can affect your warfarin therapy, but this does not mean you must avoid all alcohol. We suggest that alcohol intake be limited to 1 drink per day. Be wary during special occasions or holidays – drink only what you usually do on any day of the week.

**Healthcare**

While taking warfarin, you will be seen regularly at the Anticoagulation Clinic. It is important to attend all clinic visits in order to optimize the benefits of anticoagulation while avoiding any adverse effects.

Keep a list of all your medications and inform the Anticoagulation Clinic of any changes. Inform the clinic of any new surgeries coming up. Illnesses can also affect your INR and warfarin dose. Please contact the clinic if you become ill with fever, influenza, or infection. Also call if you have diarrhea or vomiting lasting for more than 24-48 hours.

Informing all doctors, dentists, and pharmacists that you are on warfarin will help keep you safe and healthy. Consider purchasing a Medic-Alert bracelet or keeping a warfarin card in your wallet.

**Pregnancy**

Do not take warfarin if you are pregnant or may become pregnant. Warfarin should not be taken during pregnancy. Inform your doctor and the Anticoagulation Clinic if you are or may become pregnant. Women of child-bearing age on warfarin therapy should be on some form of birth-control.
Notes