

Travelling

When travelling in the UK or abroad make sure you have an adequate supply of tablets to take with you. Inform your doctor and anticoagulant clinic so that appropriate appointments regarding blood tests can be made. There are home-testing kits you can purchase, but these can be expensive and some studies have found, unreliable. Your anticoagulant clinic will have up to date information on home testing kits.

Dentist

Always tell your dentist you are on warfarin therapy before any dental treatment.

Your Yellow Anticoagulant Booklet

This booklet contains information about your warfarin therapy and your most recent blood test result including the dose of warfarin you are currently taking. We recommend you carry this booklet with you at all times. If this is a problem the pharmacy department can supply a credit card sized card that informs anyone that you are currently on warfarin therapy.

Warning Signs

Listed below are some of the side effects that may occur if the INR level has gone out of the recommended range:

- Prolonged bleeding from cuts
- Bleeding that does not stop by itself
- Nose bleeds
- Bleeding gums
- Bloodshot eyes
- Red or dark brown urine
- Red or black stools
- Extensive or abnormal bruising

- For women, increased bleeding during periods, or any other vaginal bleeding

If any of these side effects occur contact your doctor or the coagulant clinic immediately.

Pregnancy

Women of child-bearing age should avoid pregnancy whilst on warfarin therapy. If you have any reason to suspect you could be pregnant you should contact your doctor straight away.

Useful contacts

The Pharmacy department will be happy to answer any further questions you may have regarding your warfarin therapy. You can contact us via the Medicines Helpline on 01480 364739 or via the pharmacy department on 01480 364247 (Monday - Friday 9am - 5pm).

Your anticoagulant clinic should also be available for advice.

Important things to remember

- Always carry your yellow anticoagulant booklet
- Always remind your doctor, dentist or pharmacist that you are on warfarin therapy before you receive any treatment or medicine
- Aim to keep your diet consistent

If in any doubt about whether a food or tablet is safe to take with your warfarin ASK!

References:

Stockleys Drug Interactions 6th Edition
www.naturaldatabase.com accessed 02/02/2006
Papworth Pharmacy Department Warfarin Counselling
January 2006

Warfarin

This leaflet contains important information to know when you are taking warfarin

Warfarin is a medication prescribed for people at increased risk of forming blood clots.

Certain operations e.g. heart valve replacements routinely require the prescribing of warfarin to prevent clots forming.

Sometimes medical conditions can make blood clot too easily and quickly. This could cause serious health problems because clots can block the flow of blood to the heart, brain and lungs.

The food you eat can affect how warfarin works. It is important to learn about possible drug-food interactions for any medicines you take.

Blood Tests

You will need regular blood tests whilst on warfarin therapy. These will be more frequent at the start of therapy, every few days whilst the dose is adjusted. Once stabilised on a dose the need for blood tests will become less frequent (e.g. every 10 weeks when really stable).

INR (International Normalised Ratio)

Your INR is recorded in your yellow anticoagulant booklet each time you have a blood test and your warfarin dose is calculated from this result. The front pages of your yellow booklet should be completed on discharge from Papworth. It should state the desired range of your INR, the medical condition being treated and duration of treatment.

The INR of a person not on warfarin therapy is around 1. The higher the INR the thinner the blood and the lower the INR the thicker the blood.

Time of Dose




It is important to take warfarin at the same time each day. Warfarin is usually taken at around 6 o'clock in the evening. The reason for taking warfarin at this time of day is that if you are having a blood test the next day you will get a more accurate reading. If you forget to take the dose at 6pm you can take it any time before 10pm. After 10pm the dose should be missed and the appropriate dose taken at 6pm the next day. You should record any missed doses in the back of your yellow anticoagulant booklet.

NEVER TAKE TWO DOSES TOGETHER

Tablets

On discharge from Papworth Hospital you will be provided with a pack of 28 tablets of each of the strengths stocked. The reason for this is that the dose of warfarin can change depending on the result of your blood test and you may need to take a different strength of tablet.

The tablets come in three strengths and are colour coded as indicated below:

Warfarin 1mg tablets - (brown)	
Warfarin 3mg tablets - (blue)	
Warfarin 5mg tablets - (pink)	

0.5mg tablets (white) are also manufactured, but these are not stocked at Papworth pharmacy.

Other Medication

Unless prescribed by a doctor you should avoid aspirin and ibuprofen whilst on warfarin therapy as these can affect the way warfarin works. Be careful when purchasing cough/cold remedies as these may contain aspirin/ibuprofen. In general paracetamol is safe to use as a painkiller.

If taking or purchasing any medication check with a pharmacist that it is safe to take it with warfarin.

Herbal or Alternative Medicines

People may think that because they are 'natural' herbal medicines are safe to take with warfarin. This is often not the case. Below are some of the most commonly taken alternative medicines that have been found to affect the action of warfarin.

Cod Liver Oil	Coenzyme Q-10
Cranberry	Devils Claw
Don Quai	Evening Primrose Oil
Garlic	Ginger
Ginkgo Biloba	

Ginseng	Saw Palmetto
St Johns Wort	Vitamin E
Boldo	Multi vitamins containing Vitamin K
Fenugreek	Glucosamine with chondroitin

Always check with your anticoagulant clinic, doctor or pharmacist before taking any herbal/alternative medication you have purchased over the counter, to ensure that it is safe to take with warfarin.

Diet

Certain foods can affect the way warfarin works. These include some green vegetables (cabbage, spinach, broccoli, brussel sprouts and lettuce), liver, beetroot, soya beans, green tea and ice cream. These should be avoided in large quantities, but are safe to eat in moderation.

It is important to maintain a consistent diet. You should not go on any crash diets or start binge eating. **Avoid cranberries/cranberry juice.**

Alcohol

Small or moderate amounts of alcohol can be drunk safely. The recommended maximum daily amount of alcohol allowed is 3-4 units for men and 2-3 units for women. Be careful if consuming stronger beers as they may contain more units to the pint. You should avoid irregular consumption of large amounts of alcohol (binge drinking) as this can affect the INR and make the blood too thin.