



Patient & Family Guide

2022

Warfarin Sodium

Aussi disponible en français : FF85-2063



www.nshealth.ca

Warfarin Sodium

What is warfarin sodium?

- Warfarin sodium is a type of medication called an oral (by mouth) anticoagulant. An anticoagulant makes your blood less likely to clot (thicken into a clump). This medication helps to prevent and treat abnormal blood clotting.
- This medication:
 - › prevents blood clots from forming.
 - › stops existing clots from getting bigger.
 - › lowers the risk of blood clots breaking off and moving to vital organs (like your lungs). This is called an embolus.
- Coumadin® is one brand name for warfarin sodium.

What are your questions?

Please ask. We are here to help you.

Why do I need an oral anticoagulant?

- You are taking this medication for at least one of the following conditions:
 - › Atrial fibrillation (irregular heartbeat)
 - › Prosthetic (artificial) heart valve
 - › Deep vein thrombosis (DVT) – This is a blood clot in a deep vein in your arm or leg.
 - › Pulmonary embolism (PE) – A blood clot that blocks blood flow to an artery in your lung.
 - › Myocardial infarction (heart attack)
 - › Other: _____
- Usually, your blood clots because of an injury. Sometimes your blood may form abnormal clots without an injury.

How do I take this medication?

- This medication comes in different-coloured tablets. Each colour is a different dose (amount of medication). **Make sure you are taking the correct dose**, as told by your primary health care provider (family doctor or nurse practitioner) or pharmacist.
- Take your dose at the same time each day.
- You can take this medication with or without food.

- **Do not stop taking this medication without talking to your primary health care provider.**

What if I miss a dose?

- Take the missed dose as soon as you remember. You can take it at any time on that day.
- **Do not double up on doses.** If you do not remember until the next day, skip the missed dose and continue with the next dose as usual. Make a note of the missed dose.
- Report all missed doses to your primary health care provider or pharmacist.

INR blood test

- International normalized ratio (INR) is a blood test used to check warfarin therapy. This blood test helps your primary health care provider plan the amount of warfarin you need to prevent abnormal blood clots. The correct amount of warfarin is different for each person.
- It is important to have an INR blood test regularly. If your blood clots too quickly, there is a higher risk of developing a blood clot. If your blood clots too slowly, there is a higher risk of bleeding complications (like bleeding from your gums, nosebleeds, blood in your urine [pee] or stool [poop]).

- When you first start taking warfarin, you will need to have an INR blood test 2 to 3 times a week.
- Once your primary health care provider has found the right dose for you, you will need the test once every 1 to 2 weeks for a few weeks.
- If your test results stay the same and are in the desired range, you will need the test once every 3 to 4 weeks for as long as you take warfarin.

Drug interactions

- **Warfarin is very sensitive to the effects of other medications.**
- Tell your primary health care provider or pharmacist right away if you start or stop a medication. This includes over-the-counter products, herbal preparations, and/or vitamins.
- Avoid ASA (Aspirin®) and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) unless told otherwise by your primary health care provider or pharmacist.



Food interactions

- Eating foods with a lot of vitamin K (like leafy green vegetables) may lower how well warfarin works. Vitamin K is used to reverse the effects of too much warfarin.
- Tell your primary health care provider about any changes in the amount or type of food you eat.
- Limit alcohol to 1 drink a day or less. Alcohol makes the effect of warfarin stronger.

What are the possible side effects of warfarin?

Call your primary health care provider right away if you have any signs of bleeding, like:

- › Nosebleeds
- › Bleeding gums
- › Coughing up blood
- › Unusual bruising
- › Blood in your urine
- › Black stool
- › A cut that does not stop bleeding even when you keep applying pressure

Safety precautions

- Tell your primary health care provider about any changes in your health that last longer than a few days.
- **Do not take warfarin during pregnancy.** Tell your primary health care provider or pharmacist right away if you find out you are pregnant while taking this medication.
- Tell your other health care providers that you are taking warfarin.
- Wear a MedicAlert® bracelet or carry an ID card to show that you are taking warfarin.
- Avoid activities with a higher risk of injury (like contact sports, such as football, hockey, and wrestling).
- Know the phone numbers of your health care providers in case of an emergency.



Questions?

Anticoagulation Clinic

- › Phone: 902-473-6600
- › Fax: 902-473-6812

Thrombosis Anticoagulation Program

- › Phone: 902-473-7985
- › Fax: 902-473-6260

Notes:

This pamphlet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider. The information may not apply to all situations. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

Find this pamphlet and all our patient resources here:
<https://library.nshealth.ca/Patients-Guides>

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time:
Call 811 or visit: <https://811.novascotia.ca>

Prepared by: Pharmacy Services and Hematology Services, QE II
Illustration by: LifeART Emergency 2 Images, Copyright © 1994,
TechPool Studios Corp. USA
Designed by: Nova Scotia Health Library Services

QV85-0373 © December 2022 Nova Scotia Health Authority
To be reviewed December 2025 or sooner, if needed.