

Medication Safety



***Taking your medications safely and correctly is vital to your health and well being.
Keep the following tips in mind as you take your medications:***

- Never stop any heart medications without discussing this with your physician first! Abruptly stopping some heart medications may cause an increase in your symptoms and place strain on your heart.
- Take your medications as ordered. Be sure you understand when to take each medication and any special instructions (such as taking with a meal or taking on an empty stomach).
- Learn the brand name and generic name of each medication you are on to avoid confusion and double dosing.
- Do not take over-the-counter medications or herbal remedies without checking with your physician and pharmacist first.
- Tell your physician if the cost of the medication is placing a hardship on you. There may be an alternative medication that would be less costly. Do not stop taking the medication or take the medication differently to decrease the cost.
- **Be alert!** Many medications look alike and their names may sound alike – however, they may be very different medications with very different actions. Always keep a clearly printed list of your medications with you when you go to the doctor or to the hospital. Spelling out names and referring to the labels on the medication bottles are good ways to be sure that everyone is talking about the same medication.
- If you are on multiple medications from several different physicians and use more than one pharmacy, be sure you occasionally request that your medications be screened for potential drug interactions.
- Sometimes, new medications may make you feel dizzy or lightheaded until you become used to them. Take extra care not to fall. Notify your physician if you develop dizziness or lightheadedness.

Coumadin (Warfarin) Teaching Plan

Coumadin – Its Purpose

Your doctor is starting you on a medication called Coumadin. Coumadin is a medication that reduces your blood's ability to clot. It is sometimes called a blood thinner. You may need to be on a blood thinner because you have a medical condition called:

Monitoring Coumadin Doses

When you take Coumadin, it is very important that your doctor watches and controls your medication dosages and blood levels. Your doctor is going to monitor how much Coumadin you have to take by doing a blood test called a protime/INR. This test will measure how long it takes for your blood to clot. When you first start taking Coumadin, we are going to test your blood every day and change your dose of medication frequently. When you go home, your protime/INR will probably be checked every 2-3 days. After your protime/INR levels are in the right range, your doctor will check your blood levels less frequently, probably monthly.

In order to safely and effectively use this medication, you are going to need to work closely with your doctor and follow up regularly after blood draws and medication changes. Always call your doctor's office to find out your protime/INR results and dosage changes.

Different medical problems require your blood levels to be in different ranges. It is very important that you know what range your doctor wants your protime/INR to be within. Your doctor wants your INR to be between

_____ and _____.

Coumadin Use

Coumadin comes in several different dosages. The pills are different colors and have the dosages written on them. The pills can also be easily broken in half. Always make sure you are taking the correct dose of medication. Do not just look at the pill's color. Always look at the dose on the bottle and on the pill. Do not skip doses. If you miss a pill, do not double up on the medication the following day. Keep track of any doses you might have missed.

Always take your Coumadin at the same time every day. We recommend that you take your Coumadin in the evening. We give Coumadin at 6 pm. Coumadin does not have to be taken at night in order to work effectively, but by taking it in the evening, it will be much easier for the doctor to adjust your dosages according to your daytime blood test results.

Side Effects

The biggest potential side effect from taking Coumadin is the risk of bleeding. If your protime/INR is too high, you can bleed more easily. If you're protime/INR is too low, your medication dose may not be right for you. Be aware of these symptoms of bleeding:

- Nose bleeds
- Bleeding gums
- Red or brown urine
- Red or black stools
- Cuts that do not stop bleeding
- Bruising
- Heavy menstrual flow
- Headaches, abdominal pain
- Feeling very faint, dizzy, or weak

If you notice any of these symptoms, call your doctor immediately. Your protime/INR may be too high. Your Coumadin dose might need to be changed. To prevent bleeding problems use a soft bristled toothbrush, electric razor, and avoid contact sports. Always blow your nose gently. Wear slippers or shoes to prevent foot injuries.

Dental Work and Elective Surgeries

Wear a medical alert tag or carry a card in your wallet stating that you are taking Coumadin.

Notify all of your health care providers that you are taking Coumadin, including your dentist. You may be asked by your doctors to stop taking Coumadin prior to dental work or surgical procedures. If you are taking Coumadin because you have a heart valve replacement or repair, you will be required to take antibiotics prior to dental work. Valve repairs may only require you to take antibiotics before procedures for three months after your heart valve surgery. Check with your doctors before taking over-the-counter medications.

Coumadin and Vitamin K

Warfarin or Coumadin (brand name) is a medication to help prevent blood clots from forming. Vitamin K in our body allows the blood to clot. Coumadin decreases the activity of vitamin K to slow the rate at which your blood clots.

There is no specific Coumadin diet. However, it is important to pay attention to what you eat while taking Coumadin. If you eat too many foods high in vitamin K, Coumadin will not work as effectively. **You can still have foods that have vitamin K, but you need to keep the amount you eat about the same from week to week. Consistency is the important thing!**

The average daily allowance of vitamin K is 120 mcg for adult men and 90 mcg for adult women.

Green leafy vegetables are the biggest contributors of vitamin K to our diet. Many other vegetables may have a moderate amount of vitamin K. Meat, most fruits, bread, grains and legumes, nuts and fats and oils are low in vitamin K.

Foods with very high levels of vitamin K (> 100 mcg per ½ c.)

Brussel sprouts	Kale
Green Tea	Spinach
Parsley	Green onions
Turnip greens	Mustard greens
Collard greens	Swiss chard

Foods with high levels of vitamin K (containing 50-100 mcg per ½ c.)

Beef liver	Mayonnaise
Butterhead	Broccoli
Lettuce	Cauliflower
Chicken liver	Green cabbage

Foods with moderate levels of vitamin K (containing 21-49 mcg per ½ c. serving)

Asparagus	Pistachios
Green apples	Cashews
Peas	Iceberg lettuce
Soybean oil (1T)	Red cabbage
Avocado	Coleslaw
Green and yellow beans	Olive oil
	Romaine lettuce

Foods with low levels of vitamin K (containing <20 mcg vitamin K per ½ c. serving)

Apple	Black beans
Blueberries	Cantaloupe
Corn	Grapes (red/green)
Olive oil	Potato
Banana	Blackberries
Canola oil	Carrots
Cucumber	Mushrooms
Peach	Watercress

Negligible (per ½ c.)

Cranberry juice (2.5 mcg in 1 cup)	Grapefruit juice
Tomato juice	Garbanzo beans (chick peas)

Dietary supplements, herbals and some vitamins can interfere with how your blood clots and how Coumadin works. Before taking any type of supplement, herbals or vitamins, it is important to discuss it with your physician to prevent any bleeding or clotting complications. Also, consult your physician if you are ill w/ upset stomach, diarrhea or fever that is preventing you from being able to eat for several days.