

**Q: Is it all right to take other medications with my warfarin (Coumadin®, Jantoven®)?**

**A:** Many medications can affect how well warfarin works. Some medications will increase the effects of warfarin, making the risk of bleeding higher. Other medications can decrease the effects of warfarin, increasing the risk of blood clots.

You should let the doctor that manages your warfarin know whenever you start, stop or change any prescription drugs or over-the-counter products. You should also let all of your other doctors know that you are taking warfarin.

**Common prescription drugs known to affect warfarin include:**

- Antibiotics (commonly used to fight bacterial infections);
- Anti-fungals (commonly used to fight fungus infections); and
- Some heart medications

**Q: What about the medication samples that my doctor gives me?**

**A:** Some doctors give samples to patients to help their patients save money or get them started on a new medication. As your pharmacist, other doctors, and insurance company do not automatically know when you get samples, it is important to tell all of your doctors and pharmacists when you are given any medication samples.

**Q: Can over-the-counter (non-prescription) medications affect warfarin?**

**A:** Even medications that you buy without a prescription can affect your warfarin. Some products that are known to affect warfarin include:

- Pain relievers, (e.g., aspirin, ibuprofen, naproxen, Advil®, Aleve®, Motrin®, and Naprosyn®);
- Herbal products, (e.g., ginseng, ginkgo, glucosamine, and St. John's Wort);
- Certain stomach acid-reducing products, (e.g., cimetidine, Tagamet®); and
- Multivitamins.

These medications change the way your warfarin works, and the doctor that manages your warfarin and pharmacist may not know that you are taking them. Speak to your doctor and pharmacist before starting **or** stopping any over-the-counter products.

**The bottom line:** It is impossible for you to know how a medication will affect you and your INR value. It is important to call your doctor when you start or stop any medication, so you can have your INR value checked. Your doctor can then decide if s/he needs to make any changes to your warfarin dose.

**Q: Do I need to avoid any certain foods/vitamins while taking warfarin (Coumadin®, Jantoven®)?**

**A:** It is important to understand the effect of vitamin K on warfarin. The vitamin K that you get from food and multivitamins helps your blood clot, but warfarin does just the opposite. Warfarin works against vitamin K to keep the blood from clotting. Too much vitamin K can make warfarin less effective. It is important to discuss your diet and the vitamins you take with the doctor that manages your warfarin.

You can still eat healthy foods that contain vitamin K. To help keep your INR value stable, you should try to eat about the same amount of these types of foods each day. You should also let your doctors know if you have any major changes to your diet for any reason.

Items that are high in Vitamin K include:

- Broccoli
- Brussels sprouts
- Spinach
- Multivitamins

**Q: What side effects might I experience when taking warfarin (Coumadin®, Jantoven®)?**

**A:** Since warfarin decreases how fast the body can form clots, people who are taking warfarin bleed longer than people who are not taking warfarin, especially after an injury. Keeping your INR value in the proper range will decrease your risk of bleeding.

**Note:** Even when your INR value is controlled it is still possible to experience some bleeding. You may notice minor bleeding, such as:

- Bleeding gums when you brush your teeth;
- Bruises forming more easily; and
- Bleeding from small cuts.

These types of minor bleeding are usually nothing to be concerned about, unless the bleeding becomes bothersome. If your gums or a small cut won't stop bleeding, or if you have large bruises that form for no reason, you should call the doctor that manages your warfarin.

 **Serious bleeding can be dangerous, so you should get immediate medical attention from your doctor, the emergency room, or 911 if you notice any of the following:**

 **Signs of Serious Bleeding**

- Vomit that contains blood or looks like coffee grounds.
- When you actually see (red) blood in your stool or if your stool is dark and tar-like. (The dark color may mean that there is blood in your stool).
- Urine that is red (could be "blood red" or any other shade of red - even as light as faint pink) or urine that is unusually dark.
- Coughing up phlegm (mucus) that shows blood.

**A diary or calendar is a great way to keep track of your warfarin usage.**



### **Other Symptoms to Report Immediately**

- Severe abdominal pain;
- Headaches that are severe or won't go away;
- Confusion or decreased alertness; and
- A fall or a hit on the head.

It is very important that you tell **all** of your health care providers about all of the medications you are taking. Further, make sure to tell all of your doctors, nurses, dentists, and pharmacists that you take warfarin, even if they didn't prescribe it or fill the prescription for it.

You may also want to tell your family and close friends that you are taking warfarin so they can tell your health care providers at times when you cannot. You can also buy and wear a medical alert bracelet or necklace that states you are taking warfarin.

**Q: Should I keep a warfarin (Coumadin<sup>®</sup>, Jantoven<sup>®</sup>) diary or calendar?**

**A:** A diary or calendar is a great way to keep track of your warfarin usage, especially if your doses are constantly changing. This will help prevent missed doses or taking double doses. Keeping track can be very simple. Just write down the strength of medicine and the date you took it. You should also write down any INR tests that are scheduled and the results. This will help you and your health care providers better manage your warfarin.

**Q: Can I go to the dentist or have surgery while taking warfarin (Coumadin<sup>®</sup>, Jantoven<sup>®</sup>)?**

**A:** Patients who are taking warfarin can still go to the dentist and have surgical procedures performed; but it is important to tell all of your doctors and your dentists that you take warfarin well in advance of any procedures. Depending on the situation, your doctor may choose to change how you take your warfarin before and after the procedure.

## **KEY POINTS FOR SAFE WARFARIN USE**

- ✓ Always take warfarin exactly as prescribed.
- ✓ Be sure to have your blood tested (INR test) as often as directed. (See page two for more information on this test.)
- ✓ At every visit, remind your health care provider(s) that you take warfarin.
- ✓ Tell the doctor that manages your warfarin about all medications and over-the-counter products that you use.
- ✓ Tell the doctor that manages your warfarin about any changes in the dosage of your medicine(s).
- ✓ Always maintain your diet by making healthy food choices. Tell your doctor about any major changes you make in your diet.
- ✓ Consider buying and wearing a medical alert bracelet or necklace that states you take warfarin.
- ✓ Report any increases in bleeding to your doctor.
- ✓ Seek immediate medical attention for serious bleeding, bruising or any major changes in how you feel.