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People Taking Warfarin

provide limited information on The information is provided for that you consult with a healthcare professional before taking any medication or any combination of medications. This is particularly important if you are taking any other medication in combination with Warfarin. The information provided below has been extracted from references cited at the end of this leaflet. This information has not been tested or verified by Sigma in any way, accordingly Sigma takes no responsibility and will not be liable for any reliance placed upon it.

How does Warfarin work?

Warfarin is an anticoagulant drug that slows down the rate of blood clotting and reduces the risk of unwanted clot formation. One of the processes involved in blood clot formation requires Vitamin K and Warfarin acts by inhibiting this particular process¹.

As part of your treatment with Warfarin, you will require regular blood tests to measure how long your blood takes to clot. This is called your INR (International Normalised Ratio).

Warfarin and Diet

Since Warfarin acts by reducing the activity of Vitamin K in blood clotting processes, a large change in your intake of vitamin K, either through dietary sources or from mineral supplements, may disrupt the beneficial effects of Warfarin.

Most people taking Warfarin experience no problems related to the amount of Vitamin K in their diet. However, if excessive amounts of Vitamin K-rich foods are consumed, the effect of Warfarin may be reduced, resulting in a decrease in INR. Conversely, a reduction in vitamin K intake could increase the effect of Warfarin, leading to an increase in bleeding and INR levels. As a result, it is recommended that people taking Warfarin try to keep their intake of Vitamin K-rich foods relatively stable in order to prevent INR fluctuations.

What foods contain high amounts of Vitamin K?

High amounts of Vitamin K are generally found in green leafy vegetables, such as spinach, broccoli, Brussel sprouts, parsley, silverbeet, endive and kale². (See Table 1).

In contrast, all breads, cereal grains and their milled products, nuts, most fruits and their juices*, fish, meat chicken, pork, tofu, eggs, dairy products, fats and oils, roots and tubers contain low quantities of Vitamin K.

What should patients on Warfarin do?

People taking Warfarin should eat a normal, balanced diet and maintain a consistent amount of Vitamin K intake. Drastic changes in dietary habits such as eliminating **all green leafy vegetables should be avoided**. The aim is to keep servings of Vitamin K-rich foods similar from day to day and from week to week. For example, if a person usually eats 2-3 serves of Vitamin K-rich foods daily, then they should continue to do so when taking Warfarin. One should avoid large fluctuations such as eating 2 serves a day for one week and then six serves a day for the next week. Ideally, it is recommended that the daily variation in intake of Vitamin K-rich goods not exceed 250-500 microgram (mcg).

Table 1: Vitamin K (phyloquinone) content in common vegetables

The information below has been derived from the USDA National Nutrient Database for Standard Reference, Release 17. Because the Vitamin K food content of food varies considerably according to the source and assay method used, the values are intended as a guide only.

Food	Serving size	Vitamin K content (mcg)	Classification (per serve)
Alfafa	¼ cup	10	Low
Asparagus	4 spears	30	Medium
Beans (green)	½ cup	11	Low
Broccoli (cooked)	½ cup	110	High
Brussel sprouts	½ cup	114	
Cabbage (cooked)	½ cup	36	Medium
Capsicum (green)	1 capsicum	9	Low
Capsicum (red)	1 capsicum	6	Low
Carrot	½ cup	11	Low
Cauliflower	3 florets	7.5	Low
Chickpeas (cooked)	1 cup	6.6	Low
Celery	1 stalk	11.7	Low
Corn (sweet, kernels, cooked)	1 cup	0.5	Low
Endive	1 cup	115	High
Lettuce (gourmet) eg butterlettuce	1 cup	97	High
Lettuce (Iceberg)	1 cup	13	Low
Mushrooms (cooked)	1 cup	0.2	Low
Parsley	10 sprigs	164	High
Peas (frozen, cooked)	½ cup	24	Low
Potatoes	1 potato	3	Low
Pumpkin	½ cup	1	Low
Silverbeet (cooked)	½ cup	346	High
Soyabeans (cooked, boiled)	½ cup	16	Low
Soya Milk	½ cup	4**	Low
Spinach (cooked)	½ cup	444	High
Spinach (raw)	1 cup	150	High
Sweet potato (cooked, baked)	1 potato	3.4	Low
Tomatoes	1 tomato	10	Low

*There have been reports that the consumption of cranberry juice with Warfarin can increase bleeding³, however, the data on the interactions between grapefruit juice and Warfarin are inconclusive. Therefore it is recommended that these juices be consumed with caution when taking Warfarin.

** It has been reported that consumption of soy milk (more than 1 glass/day) may reduce the absorption of Warfarin⁴.

Dietary Supplements: Supplements such as Sustagen® and Resource® are recommended for some people who need extra calories and nutrients. These products are quite low in Vitamin K (approx 10-20 mcg/serve) and therefore are unlikely to affect Warfarin absorption.

Potential interactions between Warfarin and Herbal products

Questions are frequently asked regarding the interaction of Warfarin with herbal medicines and mineral supplements. Unfortunately, due to the lack of detailed published information about the safety of herbs, it is very difficult to predict the interactions between these products and one should bear in mind that **%natural+ does not necessarily mean %safe+**. A number of herbal

¹ Hardman JG, Goodman Gilman A & Limbird LE. (1996) Goodman and Gilman's, The Pharmacological Basis of Therapeutics, 9th Ed, McGraw-Hill

² Booth, SI, Sadowski JA, Weihrach JL & Ferland G, Vitamin K, (Phylloquinone) content of foods: A provisional table. J Food Comp Anal 1993; 6:109-20

³ Suvama R, Pirmohamed M, Henderson L. Possible interaction between warfarin and cranberry juice. BMJ 2003; 327:1454

⁴ Cambria-Kiely, JA. Effect of soy milk on warfarin efficacy. Ann Pharmacother 2002; 36: 1893-6



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Coumadin and Marevan are intended to have exactly the same function. However there are differences in their formulations.

You should keep taking the brand you were started on unless directed otherwise by your doctor. The general Information contained on this leaflet applies to both Coumadin and Marevan . Brands of Warfarin.

Coumadin (Warfarin Sodium)

- Light Tan 1mg** Tick box
- Lavender 2mg** Tick box
- Green 5mg** Tick box

The dose of Coumadin that your doctor has prescribed for you is in milligrams (mg). The tablets come in three different strengths. As shown above, each strength has a separate colour and mg dose to distinguish it from the others. The label on the bottle and its lid also match the colour of the tablets to help with identification.

Marevan (Warfarin Sodium)

- Brown 1 mg** Tick box
- Blue 3 mg** Tick box
- Pink 5 mg** Tick box

The dose of Marevan that your doctor has prescribed for you is in milligrams (mg). The tablets come in three different strengths. As shown above, each strength has a separate colour and mg dose to distinguish it from the others.

are taking the right tablet by colour and strength.

..... Telephone

About this Leaflet

Your doctor has prescribed Warfarin for you . a medicine that keeps harmful blood clots from forming. Warfarin is an anticoagulant and has the brand names Coumadin and Marevan. Warfarin works by inhibiting Vitamin K-dependent blood clotting factors.

On this leaflet we tell you about anticoagulation and assist you in understanding your treatment program.

Only the name **Warfarin** will be used but the information applies to both brand names. In addition we will give you some important guidelines that will help you to get the most benefit from your treatment while leading a lifestyle that is as normal as possible. Although at first these guidelines may seem a bit overwhelming, they actually are quite simple and will prove very helpful during the course of your therapy.

Partnership!

You, your doctor and your pharmacist make a very important partnership. Your doctor will diagnose your condition, prescribe treatment and control your program.

Your part is also very important. It is essential you follow your doctor's instructions and advise your doctor of any changes in your condition, in order for your therapy program to be successful and easy to fit into your lifestyle.

Your pharmacist dispenses your medicines and can help you choose non prescription products that are right for you.

What is Anticoagulant?

When you cut your skin the blood leaks out from the damaged vessels and then clots, sealing the wound and preventing more blood being lost. Normally, blood will not clot inside the blood vessels but sometimes things go

wrong and clots form in the arteries or veins. This process is called thrombosis and it must be treated promptly or better still, prevented.

Anticoagulant drugs help to prevent or treat thrombosis by decreasing the clotting power of the blood. The object of your treatment is only to slow down the clotting process; if the blood was prevented from clotting altogether this would result in bleeding.

In order to do this safely and effectively, a careful check must be kept on the effect of the anticoagulant on your blood so that your doctor can prescribe the dosage that will keep the clotting process at the correct level.

Different people require different amounts of Warfarin. Therefore the dosage is tailored to you.

BLOOD TESTS ARE IMPORTANT

While on Warfarin your doctor will ask you to have an INR (International Normalised Ratio) blood test regularly. An INR test indicates how long blood takes to clot. A normal INR i.e. of a person not taking an anticoagulant, is approximately 1. When you take anticoagulants the higher your INR, the longer your blood takes to clot. The closer your INR is toward 1, the closer it is to normal blood. Changes in your Warfarin dose will change your INR; however these changes may not happen immediately. It can take 4-5 days before you have the full impact of a dose change on your INR. Your INR levels are very important as they help your doctor maintain the dose of Warfarin that suits you.

The three things to remember about INR testing are:

1. Have the INR test done every time it is ordered by your doctor.
2. Call your doctor or laboratory as instructed or within 24 hours of the test in case your Warfarin dose needs adjusting.
3. Record the test results on the record sheet provided.

Taking Warfarin Dosage

You must take your tablets at approximately the same time every day as specified by your doctor.

Warfarin can be taken before, during or after meals. By getting into the daily routine of marking a calendar after you have taken Warfarin and not relying on your memory, you will be unlikely to miss a dose.

Missing a dose

If you forget to take a dose and then remember within two to three hours, you can still take your tablets.

If you forget for a longer time, do not take the tablets to catch up but take your next dose when it is due and tell your doctor or laboratory.

DO NOT TAKE A DOUBLE DOSE

Changes to your INR

Different things in your life affect how Warfarin works on your blood.

- Whether you are eating properly
- Other medicines you may be taking
- The amount of alcohol you drink
- A new illness

The most important thing to remember is that when there is a big change to any of these things you must tell your doctor. The time when a change may also occur is when you leave hospital and go home (make sure you arrange for a blood test soon after leaving the hospital) and when you go away on holidays.

Other Medicines

Taking other medicines may interfere with the way Warfarin works. Therefore keep in mind the following.

- Before taking any medicines, even prescribed by a doctor (or a dentist) be certain to check with the doctor monitoring your Warfarin dose
- When we talk about medicines we not only mean prescription medicines but anything



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and liniments, cold or cough preparations, certain stomach remedies (eg. antacids), laxatives, multivitamins, containing Vitamin K and herbal medicines.

CHECK WITH YOUR PHARMACIST BEFORE BUYING ANY OF THESE AS THEY MAY AFFECT YOUR INR

- If in the past you have been taking any drugs, even prescription medicines such as the contraception pill; be sure to check with your doctor before taking them now because they might affect your response to Warfarin.

Diet Principles

A well balanced and varied diet is essential to EVERYONE to maintain health and vitality, whether they are taking Warfarin or not.

This includes eating plenty of breads, cereals, fruits and vegetables, moderate amounts of milk, cheese, yoghurt, lean meat, poultry, fish, legumes, nuts and eggs and low quantities of sugar and fats including butter, margarine and oil.

WHILE TAKING WARFARIN

- **Maintain a well balanced and consistent diet.**
- **Avoid crash dieting and binge eating.** As your dosage of Warfarin has been adjusted to match eating pattern and lifestyle, it is important any major changes be talked over with your doctor.
- **Stabilise your intake of Vitamin K.** Warfarin is affected by Vitamin K. A high Vitamin K intake in your diet can affect your response to Warfarin and lower your INR significantly. You should therefore keep your intake of Vitamin K-containing food relatively constant. This **does not** mean cutting these foods out of your diet but eating them in small to moderate quantities

a cup or two to four tablespoons. The foods that are highest in include leafy green vegetables such as spinach, cabbage, Brussel sprouts, parsley etc (not green beans or peas). See Supplementary diet chart for more details).

- **Vitamin and Herbal Supplements.** If taking dietary supplements check to see they do not contain Vitamin K. Herbal supplements and remedies often contain substances which may upset your INR balance by **increasing your risk of bleeding or increasing your risk of clotting** while you are taking Warfarin. You must discuss taking any supplements or herbal remedies with your doctor before starting them. Once you and your doctor decide the supplement is suitable for you, it is important that you take it regularly every day to maintain a stable INR. It is also important to let your doctor know if you stop taking any supplements as this may also affect your INR.
- **Alcohol.** Use in moderation and avoid binge drinking. Discuss with your doctor a safe amount to suit you.

ADDITIONAL THINGS TO REMEMBER

There are several additional things for you to keep in mind while working with your doctor to maintain the INR which is best for you.

Take exact amounts of medicine

Take the exact number of anticoagulant tablets prescribed by your doctor. Don't stop taking Warfarin or change the dose unless your doctor tells you to.

Inform other doctors and dentists

Well before undergoing treatment, surgery or dental work make sure that you inform the doctor or dentist performing the procedure that you are taking Warfarin. This includes emergency treatment following any injury. Also, tell the doctor who is supervising your anticoagulation therapy.

Check with your doctor before beginning any activity that may cause bleeding

Remember that because you are taking an anticoagulant you may have an increased tendency towards bleeding. Therefore, you

should check with your doctor before beginning any sports activities. Avoid situations with a high risk of injury.

Pregnancy must be avoided

Warfarin can seriously affect an unborn baby. All women who may become pregnant should discuss with their doctor the possible risks and available means of reducing those risks. If a woman becomes pregnant, she must discuss this with her doctor at the earliest opportunity. However, there have been no reports of the sperm from a man taking Warfarin affecting an unborn child.

Check with the doctor before starting a trip

Contact your doctor before you start on any extended trips, and while travelling try to keep your diet and level of activity as close to normal as possible.

You may need a laboratory test while you are away. Ensure the information written on this leaflet is up to date and take this leaflet with you. If you consult a doctor while you are away, inform them you are on Warfarin. Make sure you take enough Warfarin tablets with you to last the entire trip.

HANDY HINTS

It is advisable to modify some regular activities to minimize the possibility of problems occurring. Some changes to consider are:

- Using a non-slip bath mat when bathing.
- Using a soft bristle toothbrush.
- Using gloves when gardening and having a clean bandage with you in case you scratch yourself and begin to bleed.
- Using an electric shaver when shaving.

Reducing The Chances Of Problems

In prescribing your Warfarin dosage, the doctor aims for the level of anticoagulation which prevents abnormal clot formation yet does not permit excessive bleeding.

Although people who are not taking anticoagulants can ignore occasional slight bleeding, e.g. a nosebleed, in your case this could be the result of excessive anticoagulation.

Therefore, it's important for you to be extra careful in looking for certain signs.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Obvious bleeding

Signs of obvious bleeding you may notice when you are taking Warfarin are:

- Cuts may bleed for a longer time.
- Occasional nosebleeds may occur.
- Heavier bleeding during periods or other vaginal bleeding.
- Bleeding gums

Less obvious bleeding

Sometimes this may not look like bright blood but you may notice:

- Dark red or brown urine
- Dark or black bowel movements

Bruising

A bruise occurs when you bleed under the skin. If you notice you are bruising for unknown reasons or more than normal, tell your doctor right away.

As you continue to take Warfarin, it's very important that you be constantly on the look out for the signs we've been talking about.

IF ANY OF THESE SIGNS SHOULD APPEAR CALL YOUR DOCTOR PROMPTLY

Remember, the purpose of this leaflet, and the therapy program prescribed by your doctor, is to help you lead a normal life.

By following your doctor's direction carefully, while keeping in mind the guidelines given in this leaflet, you will help reduce the risk of complications.

If you do experience problems, tell your doctor **IMMEDIATELY** so the problem can be handled promptly and effectively.

Finally, use good judgement throughout your therapy program and if you have any questions be sure to ask your doctor or pharmacist.