

Alcohol

It is recommended that you do not exceed the recommended upper limit of 2 standard drinks per day.

1 standard drink

= 1 glass or half pint of beer, lager or stout

= 1 small glass of wine

= 1 single measure of spirits,

e.g. whiskey or vodka or gin.

It is dangerous to 'binge drink' while taking warfarin.

Tablet Brands and Strengths

Become familiar with the different strengths and colours of warfarin tablets you need to take.

You may need a mixture of tablet strengths to make your dose.

2 brands of warfarin are available in Ireland:

Warfant® and Teva®

Warfant® tablets	Teva® tablets
1 mg (brown) 	1 mg (brown) 
3mg (blue) 	3mg (blue) 
5 mg (pink) 	5 mg (pink) 

Always take the same brand of warfarin.

If your warfarin brand is changed notify the anticoagulation clinic promptly as it may affect your INR.

An INR check should be done 5-7 days after a warfarin brand switch.

What if I am pregnant or breastfeeding?

Warfarin is not recommended during pregnancy.

Women who are taking Warfarin should discuss plans for future pregnancy with their doctor before they conceive. If there is a chance that you could become pregnant, use a reliable contraceptive while you are taking the anticoagulant

If your period is 1 week overdue and you think you may be pregnant, do a pregnancy test. If the pregnancy test is positive, you should contact your doctor urgently. If the test is negative, re-test every 3 days until either the period arrives or the test is positive.

Breastfeeding is not recommended while taking Warfarin. Alternative anticoagulants can be used when you are breastfeeding

Illness

If you have diarrhoea or vomiting that lasts longer than 24 hours contact your doctor. If attending the hospital Emergency Department, tell staff you are taking warfarin.

Contact Sports

If you are involved in contact sports, discuss this with your doctor or anticoagulation clinic.

Travel

If you plan to travel you may need to make arrangements to have your INR checked before you go and whilst away.

- ◆ Contact the anticoagulation clinic/doctor for advice prior to travel.
- ◆ Ensure you have enough warfarin to last through your trip.
- ◆ Do not put medication in checked baggage.
- ◆ Try to maintain your usual diet.

This leaflet is for general information only and is not a substitute for medical advice.



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Mon. – Fri. 9am – 1pm



Patient Information Leaflet



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What is an Anticoagulant?

An anticoagulant prevents harmful clots from forming in blood vessels by making your blood take longer to clot. Warfarin is the most commonly used oral anticoagulant in this country.

How do I take Warfarin?

Take your Warfarin once a day, at about the same time, between 6-8pm, preferably on an empty stomach with a full glass of water.

What do I do if I miss a dose or if I take the incorrect dose?

If you remember the missed dose of Warfarin later the same day, take it as soon as you remember. If you don't remember the missed dose until the next day, leave it out completely. If the dose you took in error was much higher than your normal dose, please contact your anticoagulation clinic/doctor.

Monitoring Warfarin

To monitor the effect of warfarin you must have regular blood tests to measure your International Normalised Ratio (INR). The INR is a measure of how long your blood takes to clot. Normally, blood that is not anticoagulated has an INR of approximately 1.0. The warfarin dose required to achieve target INR varies for each person. The frequency of blood tests depends on how stable your previous INR test results have been. If you cannot attend for a test, contact your anticoagulation clinic/doctor to make another appointment, as it is important that blood checks are performed regularly. Changes in medication, medical condition, diet, alcohol intake or not taking your warfarin can alter INR. It is important that you tell the anticoagulation clinic/doctor about any changes.

Side Effects

The most serious side effect is bleeding. If you experience any of the following, seek immediate medical attention and have an urgent INR test:

- ◆ Prolonged nose bleeds (more than 10 minutes)
- ◆ Prolonged bleeding from cuts
- ◆ Blood in sputum
- ◆ Bleeding gums
- ◆ Blood in vomit
- ◆ Passing blood (red or dark brown) in urine
- ◆ Passing black or red stools
- ◆ Severe or spontaneous bruising
- ◆ Unusual headaches
- ◆ For women; heavy or increased bleeding during your period or any other vaginal bleeding.

If you cut yourself, apply firm pressure to the site for at least 5 minutes using a clean, dry dressing. *Seek immediate attention if you suffer major trauma, or a blow to the head, or are unable to stop bleeding.* Tell your doctor or dentist that you are taking warfarin if you require surgery or dental treatment.

Consider using a soft toothbrush to protect gums and an electric or battery razor if shaving to minimise risk of bleeding.

Other Medications and Herbal products

Many medicines may interfere with the action of warfarin. If you are starting or stopping another medication, particularly some antibiotics, you may need more frequent blood tests. Contact your anticoagulation clinic or doctor/pharmacist for further advice, as blood test may need to be arranged within 4-7 days of changing medication.

You should buy all your medicines and supplements from a pharmacy and tell the pharmacist you are taking warfarin. Avoid aspirin and aspirin-containing medicines unless prescribed by your doctor who knows you are taking warfarin. Avoid non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs like ibuprofen (Nurofen) which is available as an over-the-counter (OTC) medicine. Paracetamol and codeine-based pain killers are acceptable, although be aware that some paracetamol combination products may contain aspirin. Some alternative medicines and herbal products may also affect the action of warfarin. Please check with your anticoagulation clinic or your doctor/pharmacist before use.

Dietary Guidelines

It is important to eat a well-balanced diet and to keep your diet consistent so the amount of Vitamin K you eat is the same. Foods rich in Vitamin K can cause warfarin to be less effective. Any major changes in your diet may affect how your body responds to your warfarin therapy. Foods rich in Vitamin K include green leafy vegetables (e.g. brussel sprouts, kale, cabbage, spinach, lettuce), beetroot, broccoli, cauliflower, avocado, peas, asparagus, beans, lentils and liver. It is not necessary to avoid these foods; eating moderate quantities of these foods on a consistent basis will not affect the action of your warfarin.

Consistency in the intake of certain other foods/drinks is also important as sudden increases or decreases may modify the effect of warfarin. These include fish oils, mango, soy milk and grapefruit juice. It is recommended to avoid cranberry juice.

It is important to keep your diet consistent.