

# Warfarin

## What you need to know

**Warfarin** is a pill for long-term treatment of DVT and PE. The brand name for warfarin is Coumadin®. It's used to thin the blood and help keep more blood clots from forming in your veins.

It can take up to 5 days before warfarin starts to work. For that reason, most people start enoxaparin (Lovenox®) at the same time as warfarin. This gives the warfarin a chance to become effective.

### Follow the directions for your medicine carefully

A member of your care team will call you after every blood test to tell you how much medicine to take. It's important to take exactly the right amount of medicine. If you take too little, it can allow your blood clot to get larger or a new blood clot to form. Taking too much medicine can cause bleeding.

If you're also taking enoxaparin, a member of your care team will call and tell you how much warfarin to take and how often. Keep a medicine record. Write down the date, the amount, and the time you take your warfarin dose.

### When should I take warfarin?

It's best to take warfarin at the same time every day. Many people take it at dinner time, around 6:00 pm. Others take it just before their bedtime. It's easier to remember to take your medicine if you plan to take it at the same time you usually do something else, such as eat dinner or get ready for bed. Consider using a calendar or a pill box to help you remember to take the right amount of medicine at the right time of day.

### What happens if I miss a dose?

If you miss a dose of warfarin, it changes how fast your blood clots. If you forget a dose:

- Call a member of your care team immediately. Always call, even if you miss only one dose.
- Take the missed dose as soon as you can. But don't take it if it's been more than 12 hours since you missed the dose.
- Don't take 2 doses to make up for the one you missed.
- Never stop taking warfarin unless your doctor or another member of your care team tells you to.

### Can I take my other medicines while I'm taking warfarin?

Only take medicine that your doctor has prescribed for you. Only use over-the-counter medicines and supplements if your doctor or pharmacist has told you they're okay to take.

## **Blood tests while taking warfarin**

You'll get blood tests regularly as long as you're on warfarin. This helps your doctor make sure you're getting the right amount of medicine. You might need to have your blood tested as often as twice a week at first. When the right amount of warfarin is decided, you'll probably only need to have a blood test once a month. A member of your care team will call you after every blood test to let you know if you need to make any changes to your medicine and when to get your next blood test.

**It's important to get your blood test when it's due. If you can't get your blood test on the day it's due, call a member of your care team.**

## **Are there any side effects from warfarin?**

The most important side effect is increased bleeding. This happens because warfarin thins your blood. When your blood is thin, you might have a harder time healing if you cut or bruise yourself.

## **When to call your care team**

The following signs could mean you have increased bleeding. Call a member of your care team right away if you have:

- More bruises than usual.
- Bleeding from your nose, mouth or gums for no reason.
- Bleeding that won't stop, such as from a cut or from taking your shot.
- Blood in your urine or bowel movement (your urine might look pink or brown, or your bowel movements might look black or like tar.)

## **You should also call if you've had any of these signs for more than 24 hours:**

- Pain or swelling in your leg, foot, or hip.
- Leg swelling that suddenly gets worse.
- Headache, dizziness, or trouble breathing.
- Suddenly feeling much more tired than normal.
- Running a fever, throwing up, or feeling sick to your stomach.
- Chest pain or your heart's beating faster than usual.

## **Where should I store warfarin?**

Keep your warfarin at room temperature. Don't keep it anywhere that's too hot or too cold. Keep your warfarin out of direct sunlight. Don't store warfarin anywhere that's too moist, such as your bathroom medicine cabinet or in the refrigerator. Warfarin is affected by moisture and will stop working.