

Monitoring Your INR

If you are prescribed Warfarin or Coumadin, regular blood tests are key to ensuring your blood is clotting within a target range.

The goal in monitoring your INR is to make sure you are within the target range. For most people a result of 2.0 to 3.0 is appropriate, although those at higher risk of clotting may have a target range of 2.5 to 3.5

If your INR is:

Higher than the target range – increased risk of bleeding.

Lower than the target range – You may still be at risk of blood clots leading to complications like stroke/heart attack or pulmonary embolism.

The higher your INR, the higher your risk of bleeding, the lower your INR, the higher your risk for a blood clot.

Blood's ability to clot is essential to life and forms whenever we experience any type of cut or injury. Because of certain medical conditions, blood clots can form inappropriately, leading to heart attack, stroke, or pulmonary embolism.

Everyone reacts differently to anticoagulation treatment, due to differences in diet, stress, medications and other factors. That's why it's important to check your INR when your doctor tells you to, this will ensure that your INR remains in a safe range.

Your doctor will instruct you how much coumadin/warfarin to take and when to recheck your INR. If you don't hear from us within 48 hours of having your blood taken please call the office.

If you plan to be away it is your responsibility to provide us with other contact info so that we can reach you with new dosage instructions or in case your INR is a critical result.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why do I need to take Warfarin or Coumadin (Anticoagulation Medication)?

For some people, blood clots form too easily or they don't dissolve properly. These clots can impede blood flowing through the body, potentially leading to heart attack or stroke. Anticoagulation medications slow down the clotting process to help keep you in a safe range.

What should I do if I miss a dose?

Remember you take your dose at the same time every day. Using an alarm to alert you to take your medication can also be helpful. We suggest you take your warfarin around dinner time or later in case your dose needs to change. This way we will be able to contact you before you have taken your medication for the day. If you should miss a dose, call your doctor immediately. Typically, if you remember and it is within 8 hours of when you were supposed to take it, you may take the missed dose. It is not recommended to make up your missed dose and **DO NOT DOUBLE YOUR DOSE** the next day.

What are some of the common side effects of taking warfarin?

Most people on Warfarin or Coumadin notice they bruise easier than before they started the medication or it take longer for their blood to clot if they get cuts. Others experience nose bleeds or small amounts of blood in their urine or stool. Even though these are more common, you should tell your doctor.

Go to the nearest hospital if you experience any of the following:

- Severe or prolonged nose bleeds
- Red, dark yellow or cloudy urine
- Bloody or black, tarry stool
- Bruising with no cause, meaning you did not hit that part of your body on anything, you didn't fall, no trauma has occurred.
- Prolonged bleeding from minor cuts
- Severe or heavier than normal periods
- Bloody or coffee-ground like vomit.
- Coughing up blood
- Persistent, severe headaches, backaches (especially upper-mid backache) or stomach pain.

All of these could be a sign/symptom of internal bleeding so, immediate medical attention is very important.

What is coagulation?

Coagulation is the formation of blood clots inside the body. Proteins in the blood called fibrins and small elements in the blood called platelets work together to form a clots, which helps stop bleeding when you have a cut or injury.

What can affect my INR level?

Many things can alter your INR, including stress, missing a Warfarin/Coumadin dose, herbal supplements and other medications, and some foods.

Can I drink alcohol while taking Warfarin/Coumadin?

Cranberry juice and alcohol can increase the effect of warfarin/coumadin and further slow your clotting rate, causing your INR to be too high. You may want to avoid them or stick to a very small amount while on warfarin or Coumadin.

What's the importance of Vitamin K?

Warfarin works by blocking the body's ability to use vitamin K, a necessary component in the formation of blood clots. When you're taking warfarin, it's important to keep the amount of vitamin K in your diet consistent, or it may impact the effectiveness of your warfarin/coumadin dose. That doesn't mean you have to stop eating foods rich in Vitamin K – just keep the amount of Vitamin K in your diet consistent.

What foods are high in Vitamin K?

Green vegetables such as spinach, kale and broccoli are high in Vitamin K, as are tuna, prunes and other common foods

Generally speaking, the greener the plant, the higher the concentration of Vitamin K