



Craig Hospital

Redefining Possible for People with Spinal Cord and Brain Injuries

Provided as a courtesy of
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Going Home on Coumadin®

Coumadin® is a brand name. The generic name for Coumadin® is Warfarin. They are the same drug. Coumadin® is a high-risk drug. Here is what you need to know to stay safe.

What is Coumadin® and why do I have to take it?

Coumadin® is an anticoagulant. “Anti” means against, and “coagulant” refers to blood clotting. An anticoagulant helps reduce clots from forming in the blood. Usually, patients at Craig Hospital take Coumadin® due to a history of blood clots. Coumadin® will prevent new blood clots from forming and stop existing ones from getting bigger. Your doctor will decide how long you need to stay on Coumadin®.

What precautions do I need to take while I am on Coumadin®?

Activities:

The most common problem for people taking Coumadin® is abnormal bleeding; you will need to take precautions such as:

- Use an electric razor to reduce the risk of cutting yourself while shaving
- Use a soft toothbrush to avoid bleeding of the gums
- Do not play contact sports or sports with risk of injury
- Wear gloves to protect your hands when gardening
- Avoid activities that could cause trauma or injury to your body

Cigarette smoking can influence how Coumadin® works in your blood. Because of the overall health risks of this activity, do not smoke.

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Food and Diet

You also need to know that Coumadin® can interact with certain foods that contain a lot of vitamin K. Examples of these foods tend to be green and leafy:

- Dark lettuce
- Spinach
- Broccoli
- Cabbage

Talk to your doctor about any foods you regularly eat or are worried may have high doses of vitamin K in them. You do not have to avoid eating these foods. You just need to keep your diet consistent. If you eat these foods then eat the same amount of them every day.

Drinking alcohol can influence how Coumadin® works in your blood. Because of the overall health risks, do not drink alcohol.

Medications:

Coumadin® also interacts with many other drugs. Protect yourself by doing the following:

- Tell the doctor prescribing your Coumadin® about any new drugs prescribed by other doctors, particularly antibiotics. They may want to adjust your Coumadin® dose as a result.
- Do not take any over-the-counter medications, vitamins, food supplements, or herbal supplements (in any form including teas and drinks) without first asking your doctor if they will interact with your Coumadin®.
- Do not take non-steroidal anti-inflammatory (NSAID) medications like ibuprofen without talking to your doctor. Over-the-counter medications with ibuprofen include Motrin, Advil, Aleve, and Excedrin. These can increase your risk of bleeding.
- Do not take aspirin without talking to your doctor. It can also increase your risk of bleeding.
- Also tell you doctor if you **stop** taking any medications. They may want to adjust your Coumadin® dose as a result.

Why do I need to have my blood drawn so often?

INR – International Normalized Ratio

Every person needs a different dose of Coumadin®. To decide what dose is right, a small amount of your blood needs to be checked regularly to calculate the INR (International Normalized Ratio). INR levels are very important because it tells your doctor how likely your blood will clot within a certain amount of time. If your INR is too high, you are at increased risk for uncontrolled bleeding. If your INR is too low, you are at increased risk for developing blood clots. People who do not take Coumadin® have an INR of around 1. Your doctor will want your INR results within a certain range that is unique to you and your health situation. Ask your doctor what your INR safe range is.

Coumadin

Once you leave Craig Hospital, you will have your blood drawn at your doctor's office, at a lab, or at home by a nurse. Get your blood tested when you are supposed to; do not skip these appointments. If your doctor does not call you within 24 hours of when your blood was drawn, then you need to call them. Ask for the results of your INR blood test and ask if you need to change the amount of Coumadin® you are taking. Your doctor will adjust your dose of Coumadin® to keep your INR in your safe range.

What if I miss a dose of Coumadin®?

If you miss a dose or forget to take a tablet, call your doctor immediately for what to do next.

NEVER, EVER take two doses of Coumadin® on the same day.

Take your Coumadin® at about the same time every day. It is best to take it in the evening. It does not matter whether you take it on a full or empty stomach.

When should I call the doctor?

Call the doctor if you miss a dose of Coumadin®, or if you start or stop taking any other drugs. Please contact your doctor right away if you experience any of these signs or symptoms:

- A cut does not stop bleeding after 5-10 minutes of constant pressure
- Blood in your urine or stool
- Throwing up blood; it might look like coffee grounds
- Large or unusual bruising
- Increased menstrual bleeding or unexpected bleeding
- Bleeding of the gums when brushing teeth
- Nose bleeds for more than 5-10 minutes
- Headache, dizziness, weakness (possibly a sign of bleeding in the brain)
- Falling or a blow to your body that could cause internal bleeding
- Pain, swelling, redness or warmth in your arms or legs, which could be a sign of a new clot
- If you have a medical or dental procedure scheduled, the doctor may need to stop your Coumadin® before the procedure. Alert them to any upcoming appointments.

Call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room if you have chest pain and/or shortness of breath!

Call your doctor with any other questions or concerns you might have about taking Coumadin®. For more information about Coumadin® visit: www.coumadin.com