

**MAINTAINING STABLE
BLOOD TESTS**

You will be aware that we need to keep your Warfarin blood level within a certain range. For some patients their levels are relatively stable but for others their levels can be quite erratic.

If you miss a Warfarin tablet
Do not take extra the next day. Let us know if you have missed a tablet or if you have vomiting and diarrhoea so that we can arrange further review and blood monitoring if required.

Medicines

Many drugs can interfere with the action of Warfarin so tell medical staff if you are on Warfarin if they are prescribing something new for you. This includes any cough or cold remedies. Aspirin, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, e.g Ibuprofen, Naproxen and others should be avoided as these increase the risk of bleeding.

Alternative / Herbal Remedies

Some over-the-counter remedies can affect Warfarin and the effect of other remedies is unknown. Your pharmacist may be able to advise about this but it is best to avoid intermittent use.

Alcohol

A high alcohol intake will affect the action of your Warfarin and increase your risk of bleeding. Do not drink more than 2 standard drinks per day. Don't 'save up' your alcohol allowance or have a weekend binge.

Diet

Try and eat a normal balanced diet and avoid sudden changes. Certain foods affect the way that the body metabolises warfarin, affecting the INR.

• **Foods with a big effect:**

Spinach, broccoli, lettuce (dark green and red), cabbage, soya beans, brussel sprouts, beef liver and cranberry juice

• **Foods with medium effect:**

Bacon, cheese, butter and wheat germ

• **Foods with a small effect:**

Carrots, asparagus, green peas, tomatoes, strawberries, bananas, whole eggs and chicken liver spread



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**INFORMATION
FOR PATIENTS
TAKING
WARFARIN**

WARFARIN TREATMENT

What is it?

Warfarin is an anticoagulant or 'blood-thinner' that is used to prevent blood from clotting in blood vessels.

Why it is used?

Warfarin is normally prescribed if you have an increased risk of forming blood clots. It works by reducing the formation of blood clots. This is important in the prevention of heart attacks, strokes and blockages of major veins and arteries.

As Warfarin prevents blood from clotting you should be aware of the increased risk of bleeding. It must only be used under close supervision.

How much do I need to take?

A blood test called the INR is used to find out the effect Warfarin is having or how your blood is clotting.

Too little Warfarin (low INR) means that you are not getting protection against clots.

Too much Warfarin (high INR) puts you at risk of bleeding too easily.

When do I take my Warfarin?

Always take your tablets at the same time each day. It is generally recommended that 6-7pm is the best time.

Blood Tests

All patients on Warfarin must have their blood checked on a regular basis to make sure you are getting the right dose of tablets.

Initially, patients starting Warfarin will be asked to come more regularly, often weekly until the drug level is stabilised. Most long-term patients are only required to have blood tests every 4- 8 weeks.

Blood tests taken in the health centre are usually taken by the Practice Nurse or a healthcare assistant using a finger prick test.

Or

If you are housebound the District Nurses will visit you at home to take a venous blood sample.

Getting the Result of your blood test

The Practice Nurse will process your results. She will be able to tell you

1. Your INR score
2. What dose of tablets to take
3. When you should have your next blood test.

If the practice nurse performs your test she will be able to tell you this information in person at point of testing. If your blood test is performed by another member of staff, the practice nurse will contact you usually via phonecall to give you this information, within 1 or 2 working days if there is a change to your dose.

The Yellow Anticoagulant Therapy Record Book

This booklet is your record of your treatment and on the first two pages tells you about-

1. your condition
2. how long you will be on treatment
3. what your INR scores should be
4. who is looking after you
5. how to get help in an emergency

Please read it carefully and ask if you have any concerns or don't understand anything.

Keeping the Yellow Book up to date

When you come in for your test and result have your Yellow Book and a pen handy. Write in your book –

1. The date of your blood test
2. Your new Warfarin dose
3. Your INR score
4. Book your next blood test

Bleeding and bruising

If you notice any problems with excessive bleeding or bruising telephone the surgery (tel. 50599) the same day or NHS 24 (tel .111) and do not take any more Warfarin until you have spoken to a doctor.