

Society for Vascular Nursing Patient Education: Warfarin (Coumadin®)

Coumadin® is a medicine that thins your blood in order to prevent clots from forming in your blood vessels. It is very important to keep the proper amount of Coumadin® in your bloodstream. If the level of Coumadin® drops, a blood clot could form in your blood vessels. If the level of Coumadin® is too high, bleeding may occur.

To maintain the correct amount of Coumadin® in your bloodstream:

- Take Coumadin® at the same time every day, or as-told by your healthcare provider. Coumadin® is often taken in the afternoon or at bedtime. You may take it with or without food.
- If you forget to take your medicine and remember it on the same day, take the dose as soon as you remember.
- **It is important that you DO NOT double your dose to make up for missed doses.** Instead, take your normal daily dose. If you forget for more than 2 days, inform your doctor or nurse **immediately**.
- **DO NOT** stop taking your Coumadin® unless your nurse or doctor tells you to.
- Keep your appointments for your blood tests. The blood tests are important to help your healthcare provider adjust the amount of Coumadin® that you need to take.
- Call your healthcare provider or nurse if you cannot keep an appointment.
- You may eat the day of your blood test. You do not need to fast before these tests.
- Call your healthcare provider's office after your blood tests if they have not called you. Once the right amount of Coumadin® has been determined, you should have a blood test every 1 to 4 weeks. **It is important to keep your appointments**
- Keep a record of the test results and your daily dose of Coumadin®.
- Keep eating as usual.
- **DO NOT START OR STOP ANY MEDICINES** without first talking about it with your healthcare provider, including prescription, over-the-counter medicines or vitamins.
- **DO NOT CHANGE YOUR EATING HABITS** without first talking to your doctor, nurse, or dietician.

- **DO NOT EAT** large amounts of green raw vegetables, including brussel sprouts, cauliflower, spinach, kale, broccoli, collards, parsley, cabbage, etc. Consult your healthcare provider's office with any questions.
- **DO NOT DRINK ALCOHOL.** Check with your doctor about having a small amount of alcohol (1-2 drinks) on occasion. Alcohol can increase your risk of bleeding.

As you are taking Coumadin® you may need to take some safety measures:

- Tell every doctor, dentist, or pharmacist that you see during your treatment that you are taking Coumadin®. Bring your Coumadin® log to every appointment.
- Ask your doctor or pharmacist before starting any vitamins, diet supplements or over-the-counter medicines.
- Wear an ID bracelet/carry a card in your wallet that states that you are on Coumadin®.
- Avoid injury from some daily activities that can cause you to bleed:
 - **BRUSHING TEETH**-Use a soft toothbrush to prevent your gums from bleeding.
 - **SHAVING**-Use an electric razor instead of a razor blade to avoid cutting yourself.
 - **CUTTING**-Be careful when you handle any sharp tools such as kitchen knives.
 - **DO NOT BLOW YOUR NOSE WITH TOO MUCH FORCE.** It may cause a nosebleed that will be hard to stop.
 - **EXERCISE REGULARLY**-Talk to your doctor or nurse about what exercises you can do while on this medicine.

Tell your Healthcare Provider if: You are pregnant or plan on becoming pregnant. Coumadin® should not be taken during pregnancy. You have any **of the following side effects of this medicine:** •Severe headaches •Dizziness •Urine that is pink, red or brown in color •Weakness •Bleeding that does not stop •Vomiting red blood or material that looks like coffee grounds •Loose stools that are red or black in color •Frequent nose bleeds •Bruises, bleeding or swelling without any obvious reason •Severe pain •Unusual vaginal bleeding or long periods.

If you cannot reach your doctor or nurse and have any of the symptoms go to the emergency room!

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SVN: Advancing the care of persons living with vascular disease