

**Thrombosis and Anticoagulation Team**

**Warfarin**

**Information for patients,  
relatives and carers**

## What is warfarin?

Warfarin is an anticoagulant. Anticoagulants are drugs which prevent harmful blood clots forming in your blood vessels. They do this by slowing down the clotting process.

## Are there any side effects?

There is an increased risk of bruising and bleeding with warfarin. However, if your warfarin tests remain well controlled within the target range, then the risk of serious bleeding is low.

Please report any unexpected bruising to the anticoagulant service or to your GP as soon as possible. If you notice any of the following signs or symptoms of internal bleeding, you must seek **immediate** medical advice by telephoning 999, 111 or your GP.

- Nose bleeds (longer than 10 minutes)
- Blood in stools or black stools
- Blood in vomit or sputum (spit)
- Severe new headache or symptoms of stroke:
  - F**ace – if your face has dropped on one side, if you cannot smile or your mouth or eye has drooped
  - A**rms – can you lift both arms and keep them there?
  - S**peech – may be slurred or garbled, or you may not be able to talk at all, despite appearing to be awake
  - T**ime – it is time to dial 999 immediately if you notice any of these signs or symptoms of stroke.

If you have minor signs of bruising or bleeding and your next test is in two to three days, please inform us at the time of the blood test by writing on the test slip or telephoning us before you come for the test.

Some people experience nausea and diarrhoea in the first few days of starting warfarin. If this does not pass after a few days, please contact your GP, as you may need to change medication.

## How long will I need to take the warfarin for?

This will depend on why we have prescribed it for you. Your doctor or anticoagulant practitioner will usually discuss this with you at the start of treatment. If you are unsure, please ask. Some people require treatment for a few months, others will need it indefinitely.

## What dose of warfarin should I take?

This varies from patient to patient and the dose you start on may be higher or lower than the dose you need later. Your dose will depend on the results of a regular blood clotting test.

Your blood clotting is measured by a test called an international normalised ratio (INR). The higher the INR, the longer it takes your blood to clot. Your doctor or anticoagulant practitioner will tell you your desired INR range.

When starting on warfarin you should be given a dosage slip stating the dose to be taken each day. This will be written in milligrams (mg) per day. We use 1mg (brown) and 3mg (blue) warfarin tablets and your dose will be made up of a combination of these. For example, 5mg = one blue + two brown tablets.

You will need to obtain repeat prescriptions from your GP, rather than the hospital. Please re-order when you still have at least a week's worth of tablets left to ensure you do not run out.

## What if I forget a dose?

Take your warfarin at the same time every day, ideally around 6pm. This regular time will help you to remember it. Explore different ways to remember such as setting an alarm, using a dosette box or writing on a calendar or in a diary. If you have a smartphone, there are apps that you can download that may help you.

If you forget to take your warfarin in the early evening but remember later that night, take it then. If you do not remember until the following day then miss that dose and let us know at your next INR test by writing on your form.

If you forget more than three doses of warfarin, please phone the clinic for advice.

## Where can I have my INR blood test?

There are walk-in phlebotomy departments at the Royal Hampshire County Hospital (Winchester), Basingstoke and North Hampshire Hospital and in Outpatients at Andover War Memorial Hospital. All are open Monday to Friday from 7.30am to 4.30pm.

Alternatively, you may wish to contact your doctor's surgery to see if you can make an appointment to have your blood test done there.

If you are housebound, please arrange with your doctor's surgery for a community nurse to visit.

**Please try to have your blood taken in the morning** so that if your INR is high, we can get in touch with you before you have taken your evening dose. Please avoid going for your blood test on a Friday (unless specifically requested by us) as we may not see the result until after the weekend.

## How often will I need to have an INR blood test?

You will need to have weekly/ twice weekly INR tests when you first start warfarin. As your INRs become more stable, blood tests will be less frequent, such as every 12 weeks.

It is very important that you have regular tests to check the dose you need. If you are unable to have a test on the date specified on your slip, then a test a day or so either side is fine and there is no need to tell us.

**It is vital that we have a reliable telephone number that we can use to contact you. If you do not have a telephone, please give us the number of a friend, relative or neighbour who will be certain to pass on any message from us.**

Please remember to hand in the tear off slip at the bottom of your dosage advice slip at each INR blood test to ensure your result is forwarded to us. **Please complete the blood test request form** by answering yes or no to the questions so we can be informed to safely dose your warfarin.

## Can other medicines or what I eat/drink affect my warfarin?

You should eat a well-balanced diet and avoid significant changes to your diet unless advised by your doctor. Do not crash diet. However, there are no specific foods that should be avoided.

If you drink alcohol, drink only moderate amounts and avoid binge drinking as this often causes your INR to rise.

Seek advice from a pharmacist when buying over the counter medicines and tell them you are taking warfarin. Please also inform any doctor who is prescribing or making changes to your other medications.

Do not take aspirin or medicines containing aspirin unless prescribed by your doctor.

Please tell us about any changes in medication, even if they are temporary, such as antibiotics and steroids. We also need to know if you become ill for more than 48 hours (for example, have diarrhoea and vomiting) as you may need a blood test sooner than stated on your blue slip. As a general principle, we will encourage you to have an INR test about four days after any significant health problem or medication change. A repeat test is particularly important if you have recently been discharged from hospital.

## What should I do if I think I may be pregnant?

Warfarin taken after eight weeks of pregnancy may damage the unborn baby. Do not plan to become pregnant without consulting your doctor. If you think you may be pregnant while taking warfarin, please contact your doctor at once.

## How can I contact the anticoagulant practitioners?

We are available Monday to Friday (except bank holidays) from 9.30am to 4.30pm.

Telephone: [01256 313295](tel:01256313295) or [01962 825624](tel:01962825624)

There are answer phones on both numbers if we are busy. If you leave us a message, we will try to call you back the same working day. Please clearly state your first name, surname, date of birth (and NHS number if you know it) and the reason for your call. If you are calling to let us know your slip has failed to arrive after five working days, please call us in the afternoon if possible.

Non-urgent information can be communicated to us using the bottom part of your dosage slip (see below). Please let us know of any pre-booked holidays so we can try to avoid asking you for a blood test whilst you are away.

Our email address is:

[bnh-ft.anticoagclinic@nhs.net](mailto:bnh-ft.anticoagclinic@nhs.net)

Please note that email is not secure and we will only access our emails during the working day so do not use email to contact us with urgent queries or information.

Hampshire Hospitals  NHS Foundation Trust		ANTICOAGULANT SERVICE REQUEST FORM	
<b>Please arrange for your next test to be on the</b>			
First Name SURNAME My house, My Street My Town Hampshire SO89 9XX			
			
Hospital Number		Please give details and dates of any changes in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medication</li> <li>• Hospital stays</li> <li>• Missed anticoagulant doses</li> <li>• Unusual bleeding/bruising</li> <li>• Mini stroke</li> <li>• Other</li> </ul>	
NHS number	1272341999		
D.O.B. ...	- -		
Tel No. ...	99999 999999		
A/C drug	1mg Whole Warfarin		
Diagnosis:	Other please specify		
Target INR: 2.5	Range: 2.0-3.0	Laboratory Number:	Blood Collection Date & Time:
Doctor	Not Allocated		
Surgery	Not Allocated		

## Warfarin summary checklist

### You should:

- Report signs of bleeding and bruising
- Have blood tests **in the morning** of the date advised and send the bottom part of the blue slip with your blood. Avoid having your blood tests on a Friday unless specifically requested by us.
- Take your warfarin at the same time each day, preferably around 6pm
- Take the dose advised by the anticoagulant practitioners
- Inform the clinic of any changes to your other medications
- Eat a normal balanced diet
- Carry your anticoagulant alert card with you
- Make sure the clinic has an up to date address and telephone number for you.

### You should not:

- Take aspirin or medicines containing aspirin unless prescribed by your doctor
- Crash diet or drink more than a moderate amount of alcohol
- Miss a dose of Warfarin unless advised by us to do so
- Take extra doses or change your dose of Warfarin without first discussing with the anticoagulant practitioners
- Run out of Warfarin tablets. Ask your family doctor for a repeat prescription in good time.

### Be aware:



Tell your dentist and other healthcare professionals who treat you that you are taking warfarin



If you think you may be pregnant whilst taking warfarin, contact your doctor at once



Tell the clinic of any changes of address, telephone number and/or doctors' surgery.

You should see your GP once a year for a review to check that warfarin is appropriate for you.

You will be notified by post of your results - please allow three to five working days for your slip to arrive. Avoid having your blood tests done in the afternoons and on a Friday as this will cause a delay in us passing your results to you.

[www.hampshirehospitals.nhs.uk](http://www.hampshirehospitals.nhs.uk)

Thrombosis and Anticoagulant Team  
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