

# What to Do if Your Doctor Tells You to Take Warfarin

The human body is an amazing thing!

Consider your blood!

It is on the front lines of defense after damage and injury.

You see, blood can coagulate -- that is, change from a liquid to a gel to form a blood clot -- to stop bleeding and give your body time to repair itself.

But sometimes blood coagulates too much, forming unwanted blood clots that can cause serious problems.

Today, we are going to talk to you about what to do if your doctor tells you to take warfarin.

Warfarin is an anticoagulant, which is also known as a “blood thinner.”

It is also sometimes called by its brand names Coumadin or Jantoven.

Well, I’m not going to lie. Taking warfarin will cause some changes in the way you live your life.

But if you talk to us and let us be a part of your team, we can overcome this together. We even made this handout to help.

Be prepared: we’ll need to take samples of your blood often. You should go to the lab in the morning the day that your doctor recommends.

These tests will tell us how fast or slow your blood is clotting. This is known as your INR level.

As a team, our mission is to keep your INR level within your “goal range.”

Each person is different. Your doctor will discuss your goal range with you.

It is very important that you know your INR goal range and the current dosing of warfarin that you are taking.

You also need to remember to call your nurses right away if you see any of these signs or symptoms. See the handout for a more complete list.

Vitamin K can lower your INR level and make your blood clot faster. Certain foods have lots of vitamin K. The handout includes a list of foods you should limit.

Over-the-counter medications such as Tylenol, Motrin, antacids, and even antibiotics can affect your INR levels too. Make sure to call before taking any medication.

Communication is key! We can’t help you if we don’t know what’s going on. Always let us know about changes in your health or diet, as well as any missed or extra doses of warfarin.

And remember to call us right away if you have any bleeding, bruising, or injury. Also, if you have a planned dental or surgical procedure, we may need to change or hold your warfarin to keep you safe.

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Sports or rough play could cause you to bleed easier or longer than your friends. You should talk to your doctor before participating in any sports or physical activities to make sure they're safe for you.

We know this is a big and sometimes scary change for patients and parents.

But we know you have the strength inside you to overcome these obstacles.

And remember, the team is here to support you every step of the way.