

Warfarin: 5 Things You Can Do to Take It Safely

Warfarin is an important medicine if you're at high risk for blood clots, because it helps prevent the kind of clots that could cause a stroke or block blood flow to your lungs.

But there's more to taking warfarin than just swallowing a pill every day.

You want warfarin to work well enough to prevent blood clots.

But you don't want it to work too well, because that could cause serious bleeding.

And staying in that safe range can be a little tricky, because lots of things can change the way warfarin works.

For example, some foods and other medicines can increase your chance of clotting.

And some can increase your chance of bleeding.

So, here are five things you can do to help make sure you're staying in the safe range.

One: Take your warfarin at the same time each day.

This helps keep the medicine working the same throughout the day- and from one day to the next.

Two: Get blood tests as often as your doctor tells you to.

These tests tell you and your doctor if you're taking the right dose or if it needs to be changed.

Three: Talk with your doctors.

Make sure they know you take warfarin.

Many medicines change the way warfarin works.

So keep a list of the medicines you take, and show it to any doctor or dentist you visit.

And check with your doctor before you start or stop taking any medicine or natural health product.

Four: Be careful what you eat and drink.

For example, it's important to keep the amount of vitamin K in your diet steady, because vitamin K affects how well warfarin works.

So, if you enjoy foods that are high in vitamin K, like green leafy vegetables, you can eat them.

Just try to keep the amount the same from day to day.

Alcohol affects warfarin too, so you may need to avoid or limit it.

And five: Stay active, but be safe.

A fall or injury to the head could cause bleeding that's hard to control.

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So get emergency help if you get injured; have a sudden, severe headache; or have signs of bleeding, like new bruises... or blood in your urine or stool.

So, that's five things you can do to be safe when you take warfarin.

Take it at the same time each day.

Get blood tests.

Talk with your doctors.

Be careful what you eat and drink.

Stay active, but be safe.

It's a lot to keep track of.

But you won't be doing this alone.

Your care team will help you learn how to take warfarin safely and can answer any of your questions.

And remember, even though warfarin takes extra work, it's worth it—because it could save your life.