



CORNERSTONE MEDICAL CLINIC

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Using Coumadin At Home

What is Coumadin?

Coumadin is an anticoagulant: *anti* means against and *coagulant* refer to blood clotting. It is used to prevent abnormal clotting and is prescribed by your doctor to prevent harmful clots from forming or moving.

How does Coumadin work?

Coumadin slows down the formation of clots by lowering some of the clotting factors in your blood. Some people refer to anticoagulants like Coumadin as *blood thinners*.

Are all blood clots bad?

No. For example when you cut yourself, your body forms a clot to stop the bleeding and prevent hemorrhaging (excessive bleeding). Various components in your blood called *clotting factors* affect the time it takes for a clot to form.

What is the purpose of lowering clotting factors?

The goal is to prevent harmful clots from forming or moving. To do this, your doctor has determined a certain clotting time or protime (short for Prothrombin Time) for your condition. By having you take Coumadin in prescribed amount, the doctor can control this time and thereby reduce clotting tendencies.

How will the doctor determine my protime?

A sample of your blood will be put through a prothrombin test. This test measures the time it takes for a clot to form. Your doctor will compare your time to a standard, determine the effect Coumadin has had on your clotting time and adjust your dosage accordingly.

How often will I have to take protime tests?

At the beginning of your therapy, you may be tested more frequently as your physician determines the dosage for your individual condition. Once your dosage is adjusted, you'll probably have a protime test done monthly. It is essential to have your protime test done when scheduled and to hear from your doctor after each test to see if your Coumadin dosage needs adjustment. These tests let your doctor know the level of clotting factors in your blood. Coumadin is a very individualized medicine and people react differently to it. These tests help your doctor adjust your Coumadin dosage more accurately.

What factor may influence protime test results?

Many outside factors such as diet, alcohol consumption, physical activities and other medicines can affect protimes. You will need to notify your doctor of any significant changes.

Why must I be concerned about other medications?

Many other drugs can influence the action of Coumadin. Before you take any new medication, stop any medication or change the amount any medications you are taking, call your doctor first. These include:

- prescription drugs
- non-prescription drugs such as aspirin, cold and cough medicine, antacids, laxatives or anything you may take for aches and pain
- vitamin preparation containing vitamin K, or large amount of vitamins A, E or C
- diet products such as liquid food supplements or meal replacement products

Why should I be concerned about changes in my eating habits?

Changes in your eating habits can affect the action of Coumadin. Before you make any major changes in your diet, talk with your doctor. Your doctor will be concerned about these changes, especially in the amount of vegetables you eat. Because vitamin K plays a powerful role in blood clotting, it is important to keep the amount of vitamin K your eat consistent by eating approximately the same amount of it each day. A diet containing a consistent vitamin K content of 70 to 140 micrograms is recommended. For example, do not eat a small amount of vitamin K one day and double up the next. In general you should stay away from excessive amount of foods high in vitamin K, such as green and /or leafy vegetable. You may also want to avoid all herbal teas, especially green tea, and papain (papaya enzyme used to aid digestion). Also avoid large amount of fried or boiled onion (as in French soup) as well as cooking oils with silicone additives. The following chart gives you the vitamin K content of common foods and can help you monitor your vitamin K intake.

Why should I report change is the amount of alcohol I drink?

Alcohol may affect the action of Coumadin. While on Coumadin you must avoid binge drinking. If you wish to change the amount of alcohol you ordinarily consume, first talk with your doctor.

What the important things to remember about taking Coumadin?

Always take the exact amount of Coumadin prescribed at the same time each day. If you forget a pill one day do not double up on the next day. Taking two pills will upset the balance of the clotting factors in your blood. Keeping on schedule in terms of the amount and the time you take your medication helps maintain the Coumadin balance in your blood. Never stop taking Coumadin without your doctor's prior knowledge or approval.

Do I need to report any illness?

Yes! Inform your doctor of any illness as soon as it occurs, including a fever. Infections and illnesses will

Vitamin K Chart

Food		Portion Size	Micrograms of Vitamin K	Rank of Vitamin K Content
Fruits	Apple	1	4	Low
	Banana	1	0.6	Low
	Orange	1	7	Low
	Pears (canned)	1 cup	1	Low
	Strawberries	1/2 cup	13	Low
Fats	Oil	1 Tablespoon	1-8	Low
Eggs	Egg	1 whole egg	25	Medium
Meats	Bacon	4 strips	14	Low
	Beef liver	4 ounces	118	High
	Chicken breast	3 1/2 ounces	.01	Low
	Chicken liver	3 1/2 ounces	26	Medium
	Ground beef	4 ounces	5	Low
	Pork Liver	4 ounces	99	High
	Pork tenderloin	4 ounces	11	Low
Milk	Butter	1 tablespoon	4.2	Low
	Cheese	3 1/2 ounces	34	Medium
	Milk (nonfat/1%)	1 cup	12	Low
Cereal	Oats (rolled)	1/2 cup	76	Medium
	Rice	1/2 cup	.005	Low
	Bread (white)	1 slice	1	Low
Beverages	Coffee	8 ounces	91	Medium
	Tea (green)	8 ounces	1709	High
Vegetables	Asparagus	1/2 cup, raw	27	Medium
	Broccoli	1/2 cup	103	High
	Brussel sprouts	1/2 cup	600-2325	High
	Cabbage	1/2 cup, raw	67	Medium
	Cauliflower	1/2 cup, raw	191	High
	Chick peas	1/2 cup, dry	264	High
	Corn	1/2 cup	6	Low
	Green beans	1/2 cup	16	Low
	Kale	1/2 cup, raw	151	High
	Lettuce	1 cup	62	Medium
	Potato	1/2 cup	12	Low
	Pumpkin	1/2 cup	2	Low
	Spinach	1 cup, raw	144	High
	Tomato	1 medium	23	Medium
	Turnip greens	1/2 cup, cooked	490	High

affect how your body handles Coumadin. Before any treatment, inform doctors, dentists, or any health care provider that you are taking Coumadin.

Is it okay to start a new sport or physical activity?

Talk with your doctor before starting any new activity. Avoid contact sports that expose you to the risk of serious injury. If you wish to make any changes in your daily activities, remember that changes may affect your dosage.

Does Coumadin affect pregnancy?

Yes! Inform your doctor immediately if you become pregnant or are planning a pregnancy. This is very important because Coumadin should not be taken during pregnancy. If you plan to become pregnant, discuss this with your doctor.

Can I travel while taking Coumadin?

Yes, but check with your doctor before taking a trip. You may need a protime test before you leave. Remember if you have your protime tested away from home, it can change, especially if you travel overseas. You should discuss this with your doctor before leaving.

Should I report all injuries and cuts to the doctor?

Report any signs of bleeding or any other unusual symptoms. While on Coumadin you may tend to bleed more easily. Learn and watch for some of the obvious and not so obvious indications of bleeding. If any of the following occur call your doctor.

- a fever or developing illness, including vomiting, diarrhea, or infection
- pain, swelling, discomfort, or any other unusual symptom
- prolonged bleeding from cuts, nosebleed, unusually excessive bleeding from gums when brushing teeth, increased menstrual flow or vaginal bleeding
- discoloration of the urine or stool, including dark brown urine and red or black color in the stool
- unusual bruising for unknown reasons

If any of these sign appear, don't be alarmed. But do call your doctor promptly. Your doctor can help prevent more serious problems from developing by adjusting your Coumadin dosage.

Be assured that you can have a normal lifestyle providing you work in partnership with your doctor and use good judgement. Just remember:

- Take Coumadin on your regular schedule and only the dose prescribed.
- Watch for signs of bleeding.
- Report for all scheduled protimes.
- Follow the guidelines for diet, other medications and lifestyle.
- Contact your doctor if you have any questions.