

## COUMADIN/WARFARIN (ANTICOAGULANT)

### What is Coumadin?

Coumadin (crystalline warfarin sodium) is a brand of anticoagulant (blood thinning) medication. “Anti” means *against* and coagulant means *causing blood clotting*. Coumadin controls the way blood clots inside your blood vessels. Coumadin makes your blood thinner and less likely to clot.

### How does Coumadin work?

Coumadin helps your body control how fast your blood clots. It helps prevent clots from forming inside your blood vessels and heart. If you already have a blood clot, Coumadin may prevent the clot from getting larger or traveling to another part of your body. Coumadin does not dissolve a blood clot; however, the clot may dissolve on its own.

### How do I take the medication?

Coumadin is taken as a pill each day. You will need to get regular blood tests to tell how well the medication is working. The test results help the doctor decide the dose of coumadin that will keep a balance between clotting and bleeding. Your doctor will use the results to make changes in the dose of medication. Follow your doctor’s instructions for getting blood tests and adjusting your daily coumadin dose.

### Precautions When Taking Coumadin

#### **Medications**

Many medications and vitamins can affect how coumadin works, including:

- Some prescription medications
- Non-prescription medications such as acetaminophen, aspirin, ibuprofen, nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), cold and cough medicines
- Antacids, laxatives or other medications for pain or discomfort
- Vitamins containing vitamin K or large amounts of vitamin E or C

***Do not stop or start any medications without first talking to your doctor.***

#### **Pregnancy, Surgery, and Dental Work**

- If you are a woman taking coumadin and planning to become pregnant, talk with your doctor about the possible risks of coumadin to the fetus and ways to reduce those risks. **Tell your doctor right away if you become pregnant and are on coumadin.**
- Before receiving treatment, tell **all** of your doctors and dentists you are taking Coumadin.

#### **Diet and Exercise**

- Large amounts of foods high in vitamin K may change the way Coumadin works. Do not limit foods high in vitamin K to a 1/2 cup, cooked serving or one, 3-ounce, raw serving per day, just **BE CONSISTENT WITH WHAT YOU EAT**. Foods rich in vitamin K include green tea, beef liver, soy oil, tofu, broccoli, brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, chick peas, kale, lettuce, turnip greens, seaweed and spinach.
- Talk with your doctor if you are planning any major diet changes.
- Check with your doctor before starting any exercise or sports program. Some sports should be avoided while on coumadin such as; football, wrestling, and baseball.
- Alcoholic beverages can also change the way Coumadin works. Ask your doctor about the amount of alcoholic beverages you may drink.
- Marijuana may change the way coumadin works in your blood by increasing the effect of the coumadin. Be as truthful as possible with your provider when answering uncomfortable questions.

### **Daily Activities**

- Be careful when using razors. Use an electric razor or hair-removing creams to lessen the chance of cuts.
- Use a soft toothbrush. Brush and floss gently to prevent bleeding from the gums.

### **Illness and Emergencies**

- Keep your doctor's phone number close by in case of an emergency.
- Call your doctor if you have any symptoms of illness, such as vomiting, diarrhea, infection or fever.
- Always carry or wear identification that states you are taking Coumadin.
- Falls that cause bruising (bleeding under the skin) and cuts from sharp objects are more serious when you are taking Coumadin. Call your doctor if you have any injuries that involve falls or blows to the head.

### **If You Cut Yourself..**

- If the cut is *small*, apply constant pressure over the cut until the bleeding stops (this may take up to 10-15 minutes). If the bleeding doesn't stop after 20 minutes, continue to apply pressure and go to the nearest emergency room.
- If the cut is *large*, apply constant pressure and get help immediately either by phone or by going to the nearest emergency room.

### **Call your doctor if you notice any of the following signs of bleeding:**

- Feeling tired or looking pale (sign of anemia)
- Bleeding from cuts that won't stop after applying pressure for 15-20 minutes.
- Persistent bleeding from the nose or gums.
- Menstrual bleeding that is heavier or longer than normal.
- Reddish or rusty colored urine.
- Bowel movements that look bright red or black.
- Bruises that appear without reason or become swollen; or, purplish spots on your skin.
- Vomiting blood (which may look like coffee grounds).
- Coughing up blood.
- Unusual hemorrhoid bleeding.
- Unusual pain or swelling, especially in the joints.
- Unusual headache.
- Stomach or abdominal pain.

*If you have any of these signs, contact your doctor right away.*

**If you have any questions regarding your Coumadin therapy, contact KC Clevenger at 303.861.6972 or the Hematology fellow at 303.861.6740.**