

ANTICOAGULATION SERVICES

Welcome! Now that you have been prescribed an anticoagulant medication (Coumadin), you have become part of a very special program. The program is designed to help you and your doctor during the time you will be taking this medication. We will discuss this medication with you in depth as well as the routine you can expect in the future. You will also receive various information materials designed to assist you in taking the medication properly. You will play an important role in ensuring the success of your therapy. You will probably have many questions about Coumadin. This handout will answer some of those questions but always feel free to call us with any concerns that may arise.

WHAT IS ANTICOAGULATION?

Coagulation is a term that refers to the formation of blood clots, a normal body reaction if, for example, you cut yourself. Coumadin is called an anticoagulant because it works against the formation of blood clots that could be harmful to you. Although Coumadin is sometimes called a “blood thinner” it works in the liver to decrease the production of natural blood components called clotting factors. In many cases, Coumadin is used as a preventative treatment to reduce the change of forming a blood clot that could hurt you. Coumadin therapy is also used by people who have already experienced a serious blood clot.

HOW IS TREATMENT WITH COUMADIN MONITORED?

Your body's response to Coumadin is monitored by a blood test. The result of which is called the International Normalized Ratio (INR). The blood test can be done by two methods: (1) by drawing a small amount of blood from the arm and (2) by a finger-stick to obtain a drop of blood. When you begin taking Coumadin, this blood test must be done frequently (once or twice weekly) to determine your body's sensitivity to the medication. As you become stabilized on Coumadin (after a few weeks), the frequency of blood test monitoring will be gradually reduced. Most people taking Coumadin on an ongoing basis require a blood test only once a month.

WHAT IS THE INR?

The International Normalized Ratio is the name for the blood test used to monitor your Coumadin. Because the test result may normally vary from day to day, we try to maintain your INR number within a desired range (never a specific number). The goal INR range for most people is 2.0 – 3.0 although some people require a reading of 2.5 – 3.5 (or higher). We will discuss with you what your target range will be. Remember, changes in your overall health, physical activity, diet, or other medications can affect your INR reading.

WHY DOES MY COUMADIN DOSAGE CHANGE?

The effect you get from the amount of Coumadin you take depends on several things including changes in your other medication, illnesses, your diet, and your general lifestyle. To ensure that you continue to take the correct amount of Coumadin, you should do four things:

1. Take Coumadin each day according to the directed schedule. Your Coumadin calendar will help you keep track of the correct dosage.
2. Have your blood test done regularly as scheduled by the anticoagulation staff.
3. Always report all changes in your other medication, health, and lifestyle to us. Call us anytime at _____.
4. Do not accept a generic substitution for Coumadin.

WHEN SHOULD I COME IN FOR MY BLOOD TEST?

Each time you have your INR test done, the staff will tell you the next date to have your blood tested again. If you are having your blood tests done by the finger-stick method, you will be given a specific appointment time with the staff. If you are having blood drawn from your arm at the laboratory, you can have your test done (without an appointment) during normal business hours. A standing order for the INR test is kept in the laboratory during the entire time you take Coumadin. If you are unable to have your blood tested on the date specified by the staff, please call our office immediately.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO USE THE COUMADIN CALENDAR?

Because your Coumadin dosage can change from one day to the next, we strongly encourage you to keep track of your doses in the calendar provided. Check the calendar each day to see how much Coumadin to take – don't guess. If you get confused, just give us a call.

WHEN IS THE BEST TIME TO TAKE MY COUMADIN EACH DAY?

Coumadin is taken just once each day. As a general rule, we advise all patients to take Coumadin at approximately the same time each day usually between 5:00 – 7:00 p.m. If you have difficulty remembering to take it in the evening, please discuss this with the staff. You can take Coumadin with or without food (it will not upset your stomach). You can also take Coumadin at the same time as most other medications.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF THE COUMADIN IS DIFFERENT FROM THE PREVIOUS REFILLS?

Do not accept substitutions for Coumadin. Pay close attention to the name COUMADIN, shape, strength (mg) and number of tablets you receive. Call your physician if the medication has changed color, size or other physical characteristics.

WHAT ABOUT MY OTHER MEDICATIONS?

1. Never take aspirin (along with Coumadin) without our knowledge. If your doctor has recommended that you take one coated aspirin/Ecotrin daily, do not take more than this while you are taking Coumadin. Your daily coated aspirin/Ecotrin dose should never exceed 325 mg.
2. Do not take Ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin, Nuprin, Medipren, Excedrin IB, Haltran, Midol 200, Pamprin 1B, Trendar, or others), naproxen (Advil, Naprosyn, or Anaprox), ketoprofen (Orudis, Actron), cimetidine (Tagamet HB), or famotidine (Pepcid AC) while taking Coumadin.
3. Do not take vitamin E or vitamin C supplements without our knowledge.

WHAT CAN I TAKE SAFELY ALONG WITH COUMADIN?

1. For headache or pain relief: acetaminophen (Tylenol).
2. For constipation: Metamucil or Milk of Magnesia.
3. For cold symptoms: Chlor Trimeton or Benadryl (for runny nose/sneezing/watering eyes) and Robitussin (for cough).

WHAT IF I AM SCHEDULED TO SEE ANOTHER DOCTOR OR DENTIST?

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1. Tell all health care providers that you are taking Coumadin.
2. Contact us if and when you will be seeing another doctor particularly if surgery or dental procedures are involved. We may need to adjust your dosage before your appointment. Some people (with artificial heart valves) will also need antibiotics beforehand even for such a minor procedure as teeth cleaning.
3. Call and let us know about any new medication that anyone prescribes for you before you begin taking it.
4. Do not take any herbal remedies or supplements prior to discussing it with the anticoagulation staff as this may alter the affects of your Coumadin.

WHAT ARE COUMADIN'S SIDE EFFECTS?

Coumadin is relatively free of side effects. It will not make you drowsy, change your blood pressure, make your mouth dry or increase your heart rate. If something feels different from normal that you think might be caused by the medication, however, please call so that we can discuss it.

MUST I CHANGE MY DIET WHLIE TAKING COUMADIN?

Some foods are high in vitamin K, which can counteract the effect of Coumadin. You may continue to include these foods in your diet in moderation. That is, one normal serving-size portion (3-4 oz) per day. Common foods high in vitamin K include green leafy vegetables (brussel sprouts, broccoli, cauliflower, spinach and other greens), chick peas, beef and pork liver, and green tea (served in Oriental restaurants). Most important, be consistent with what you normally eat and notify us if you wish to go on any special diet. Likewise, you should also call us if you are

ill (vomiting/diarrhea) and not eating at all, as this will affect your Coumadin.

MAY I DRINK ALCOHOL WHILE TAKING COUMADIN?

Alcoholic beverages in moderation are safe while taking Coumadin. This means a maximum of two drinks per day (1 beer = 1 glass of wine = 1 cocktail/shot). Excessive alcohol intake puts you at significant risk for injury and potential bleeding complications while taking Coumadin. Use common sense and be careful.

MUST I LIMIT MY DAILY ACTIVITIES WHILE TAKING COUMADIN?

Remember that because you are taking Coumadin you might have an increased risk for bleeding. Moderate exercise and activity are safe for most people taking Coumadin but always check with your doctor before beginning any sports activity or situation that can put you at increased danger of injury.

WHAT IF I FORGET TO TAKE A DOSE OF COUMADIN?

Do not double up your dosage if you forget to take it. Take your next regularly scheduled dose and be sure to notify the anticoagulant staff at your next visit. If you miss several doses, please contact your doctor. They may need to give you special instructions on how to resume taking your Coumadin.

WHAT IF I EXPERIENCE SOME UNUSUAL BLEEDING?

Signs of bleeding include prolonged bleeding from cuts, nosebleeds, gums bleeding, increased vaginal bleeding, blood in the urine, or red/black stools. If bleeding from the nose or skin, apply firm, direct pressure to the area until bleeding stops. If you notice blood in the urine or with a bowel movement, call us immediately. You might note a few more bruises on your skin while taking Coumadin; this is not worrisome unless they become large or painful or don't go away in a reasonable amount of time. When in doubt or if the bleeding is persistent, please call. Bleeding may be a sign that your INR is too high.

WHAT IF I GET SICK?

Acute illness will change your body's response to Coumadin. An episode of congestive heart failure, fever (over 101 F), flu, viral/bacterial infection, nausea, or vomiting (for more than 24 hrs) can cause Coumadin to accumulate in your body and your INR to go up dramatically. If you experience any of the above, please contact the staff so we can discuss how you are feeling. Remember also to call us before you begin taking antibiotics for any reason. Your Coumadin dosage must be adjusted in almost all cases. If you should decide to have a flu shot, plan to have your INR tested 7-10 days later as it also can affect your Coumadin response.

SHOULD I CONTACT MY DOCTOR IF I GO ON AN EXTENDED TRIP?

Yes. A trip may influence your diet, availability of the medication, and keeping a scheduled INR appointment. Let your physician's office know when you will be away.

Coumadin is a complex medicine that is helpful for many people with your medical history. You are the most important person in ensuring that your therapy is successful. Remember:

1. Let all health and dental care providers know that you are taking Coumadin.
2. Have your INR tested regularly as scheduled.
3. Food, drink, illness and other medications affect your Coumadin.
4. Call us at _____ with any question you might have. We are here to help you.

ANTICOAGULATION PATIENT INFORMATION SHEET

1. Take Coumadin at the same time each day.
2. Report for your blood test on the scheduled date.
3. Observe for any signs of bleeding.
4. Avoid aspirin products, multi-vitamins containing added vitamin K and ibuprofen.
5. Inform staff of any dietary changes.
6. Avoid/limit alcoholic intake.
7. Be safety conscious to avoid accidents and injury.
8. Inform anticoagulation clinic of all medicine changes.

REMEMBER...

Report any of the following to your physician or nurse:

1. Nosebleeds
2. Unusual bleeding from mouth or gums
3. Coughing up blood
4. Blood in urine and bowel movements
5. Abnormal vaginal bleeding
6. Excessive bruising
7. Cuts that will not stop bleeding

TELEPHONE NUMBERS TO KNOW:

Physician _____ Emergency Services _____

Note: Have this information sheet available when you call.

Date: _____ Information given by: _____

I understand the Anticoagulation information given.

Patient Signature