

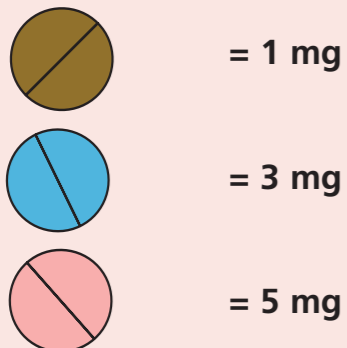
Warfarin is an anticoagulant drug prescribed to prevent clots forming in the blood or to treat clots that have already appeared.

How do anticoagulants work?

Anticoagulants may also be referred to as "blood thinners", although they do not actually thin the blood, they do lengthen the time it takes for the blood to clot. The test to measure this clotting time is called an INR. INR stands for International Normalised Ratio. This test enables the doctor or nurse specialist to adjust the warfarin dose to suit you.

How much warfarin?

The nurse specialist or doctor will decide the strength and amount of warfarin that you need, depending on the result of your INR blood test. Different strength tablets = different colours.



How long may you need to take warfarin?

This depends upon the reason for prescribing it. As a general rule warfarin is prescribed to treat a blood clot for 3 – 6 months.

For an irregular heart beat, recurrent blood clots or some heart valve problems, warfarin is prescribed indefinitely.

When should you take your warfarin?

Warfarin works best if it is taken at **the same time each day.**

We suggest you select a convenient time to take your tablet that is easy for you to remember and stick to it every day.

If you forget to take your warfarin on one day, just carry on with the prescribed dose the following day at your normal time. Do not double up on the dose.

Some people find it helps to use a calendar and mark off each dose by a line through the date. In this way you are unlikely to forget.

| October | | | | | | |
|---------|--------|---------|-----------|----------|--------|----------|
| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 |
| 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 |
| 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | | | |

The anticoagulant clinic

When you arrive at the hospital, first please go to the Haematology department on level 5 of Outpatients, where a blood sample will be taken to check your INR.

Blood test results

After your blood test you will be given your pink appointment form with your :

- **INR blood test results,**
- **the correct dose of warfarin you must take, and**
- **your next appointment date and time.**

Next - visit clinic or mail result?

If your appointment on your pink form says – visit clinic, please make sure that you wait to be seen in clinic 3A (level 3 Outpatients) by a nurse.

If your appointment on the pink form says – mail result, you can go home as soon as your blood is taken and the result will be sent to you by mail.

If your warfarin dose needs to be changed, you will be contacted by phone between 1 pm and 4 pm on the same day, so please make sure we have a valid contact phone number on your pink form.

Supplies of warfarin tablets

Never run out of your warfarin tablets. Always have a supply of all colours on hand from your GP, so that your dose can be easily adjusted after you INR blood test if necessary.

Your yellow record book - (therapy book)

Always carry your yellow record book with you together with the pink appointment sheet.

The warning signs of too much warfarin

If you take your warfarin as directed and have regular blood tests then you should not have any problems taking warfarin.

Warning signs of incorrect dosage

The following are indicators that the dose of warfarin is or has been too high:

- severe bruising,
- prolonged nose bleeds,
- bleeding from gums,
- severe bleeding from a small cut,
- unusually heavy bleeding during periods,
- passing black 'tar-like' bowel movements that are foul-smelling,
- passing blood in urine.

If you experience any of the above symptoms you must go to your nearest hospital Emergency department so that your INR blood test can be done immediately.

Please remember to take your yellow record book and your most recent clinic appointment letter with you.

Drugs that interact with warfarin

Some drugs can interact with warfarin and should usually be avoided where possible. If this is not possible you may require more frequent monitoring. You should check first with your GP or the doctor in the anticoagulant clinic.

Always ask your chemist before buying any remedies or medications that they are safe to take with warfarin.

Some common examples of drugs that can increase or reduce the effect of warfarin are:

- Aspirin
- Thyroxine
- Allopurinol
- Co-proxamol
- Spironolactone
- Simvastatin
- Cimetidine
- Ibuprofen
- Tamoxifen
- Oral contraceptives
- Some antibiotics

In addition we advise you not to take any health shop herbal remedies such as St John's Wort, Cod Liver Oil and Vitamin capsules.

Please note – cranberry juice can also interfere with warfarin.

Please remember, always tell the clinic staff if any of your medication has been changed since your last visit to the clinic.

For further information and advice

Please phone 020 7288 5390 or 020 7288 3516
Monday to Friday (9 am – 5 pm).

Anticoagulant clinic



Taking warfarin

