

Warfarin/Coumadin®

UPDATES

Winter 2008-2009

Don't Forget

Warfarin/Coumadin® management is essential in preventing and treating a wide variety of disorders such as blood clotting and atrial fibrillation. There are some risks related with its use. Education and monitoring of therapy can reduce these risks.

Our goal is to call you with your INR results as soon as possible, but remember we must first address lab results that are extremely low or high before the less critical results are processed. For established patients whose INR has been stable and without any need for change, we may send a result letter only with your schedule

and your next assigned blood draw date. If you do not receive either a call or letter within one week of having your INR drawn, please contact our service.

Herbal Supplements

- Can interact with warfarin/Coumadin®. Some cause the INR to drop and others can cause an increase.
- Discuss with your physician prior to taking them.
- Always call us prior to starting any nutritional supplements or herbal drinks.
- Check INR one week after starting any new supplements.
- We can never recommend that you take herbs, vitamins or supplements. This should be discussed with physician.



Prescription Refills

- Allow 24 hours for your refill to be called into the pharmacy.
- Please call for a refill before you run out.
- If you are running out of your warfarin/Coumadin® too soon, let us know. We will need to authorize more tablets per month.
- Always check your new refills for the correct milligram strength, number of tablets, color and shape of the tablets.

Falls

Any kind of fall can cause injury, but the risk of bleeding is higher for people taking blood thinning medications. If you fall, you should inform your physician especially if you hit your head. Your physician may want to see you in the office immediately or order tests such as a CT scan or X-rays. If you fall and hit your head and cannot reach your physician, go directly to the local emergency room. Usually a CT of the head will be done to make sure there is no bleeding.

You should continue to monitor yourself for symptoms of bleeding. Symptoms of bleeding and clot formation can be similar, and can cause a stroke. If you develop any of these symptoms call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room.

If You Develop Any of These Symptoms Seek Attention

- Inability to speak or slurred speech
- Weakness of arms/legs
- Loss of or blurred vision
- Severe headache
- Numbness, tingling or loss of sensation
- Coughing or vomiting of blood



Procedures & Surgery

If you are scheduled for a procedure or surgery, before you call the Anticoagulation Service, it is your responsibility to discuss stopping your anticoagulation with your referring physician or surgeon. The Anticoagulation Service cannot give you instructions to stop your warfarin/Coumadin®; this **MUST** come from your physician.

Clarify with your physician then call our service with the following information:

- When you should stop the warfarin/Coumadin®

- If you will need to be covered with Lovenox® while off warfarin/Coumadin® before and after the procedure/surgery
- All Lovenox® prescriptions must come from your physician
- When you can restart the warfarin and Lovenox® after your procedure

If you are on Lovenox® before and/or after your procedure, you will need to remain on Lovenox® until your INR is back in range. You may have your INR drawn every Monday and Thursday.

Dental Procedures

For most dental procedures stopping warfarin/Coumadin® is NOT necessary. There are a few exceptions. Please make sure that your dentist is aware that you are taking warfarin/Coumadin®.

If your dentist decides that you need to stop warfarin, you should discuss this with your primary care physician before you call our service.

Interruption or modification of warfarin therapy is NOT indicated for patient's undergoing the following procedures:

- Fillings
- Crowns
- Bridges
- Root canals
- Routine cleaning
- Deep cleaning
- Single or double tooth extractions
- Sealing

Cold and Flu Season

It is OK to receive a flu or pneumonia vaccine while taking warfarin/Coumadin®. The flu vaccine may temporarily raise your INR, so please wait at least two days after you receive the vaccine to check your INR.

Please contact our service if you become ill with an upper respiratory infection or flu symptoms. We need to know if any new medications are prescribed, especially antibiotics and steroids or current medications are changed. Avoid taking more than 1000mg of Tylenol in 24 hours, as this can raise your INR. If you find you need more than this, please notify our office.



Do not take aspirin, products containing aspirin, Ibuprofen, or other medicines known as nonsteroidal agents without talking with your doctor or our service. If you develop an illness that causes vomiting, diarrhea, loss of appetite or fever for more than a few days, contact your doctor and our service. These problems can change the effect of the warfarin/Coumadin®.

Alcohol can raise your INR. Remember that if you are planning to drink alcohol try not to drink more than two ounces in 24 hours.

Communication is Very Important

Keep the line of communication open with us. If you are traveling for extended periods of time, we need to know this. We can give you a standing lab order to take with you or we can fax the lab of your choice. If your warfarin is temporarily on hold or stopped, we need to know this information. If you are moving out of the state, we can continue to monitor your INR until you are established with a new physician. Once you have moved, you should be seen by your new physician within two months.

Missed Appointment Letters

If you received a missed appointment letter, we ask that you call our service promptly to discuss.

- It helps to keep the lines of communication open
- It Improves patient care
- It helps to keep costs down

1-866-443-6144

Anticoagulation Service Hours

Monday – Friday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Our Nurse Practitioners may call you with results and dosing instructions on Saturdays and Sundays.

This newsletter is produced by the Anticoagulation Service at UMHS as a service to improve care for patients using warfarin/Coumadin®. Be Involved in Your Care. Please call Janice Norville, the nurse manager, at (734) 936-9340 to tell us what is working and what is not.