

**Warfarin Therapy**

Version No: 2 Q Pulse PPC-PHARM-403

Replaces Version No: 1

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## Patient Information Leaflet

### Warfarin Therapy

Before taking your medicine, please read this information sheet together with the patient information leaflet supplied with the medicine. If you have any questions or are unsure about anything, ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.

**What is warfarin used for?**

Warfarin is an oral anticoagulant. It prevents harmful blood clots from forming in blood vessels by making your blood take longer to clot. It is also used to stop existing clots getting bigger as in deep vein thrombosis (DVT) and to stop parts of a clot breaking off and travelling to the lungs, as in pulmonary embolism (PE), or the brain, as in stroke. Ask your doctor to explain why you are taking warfarin.

**Before taking warfarin**

It is important to tell your doctor if:

- You are taking any other medicines, vitamins or herbal products (such as St John's Wort)
- You have had surgery recently or plan to have surgery or dental work done
- You have had stomach ulcers
- You have problems with your liver or kidneys
- You have high blood pressure
- You could be pregnant or are planning pregnancy

***Warfarin carries a risk of harming an unborn child if taken in the early weeks of pregnancy. You should talk to your doctor before planning a pregnancy. You must contact your doctor straight away if your period is more than one week overdue or you think you might be pregnant.***

**Warfarin tablets**


There are 3 strengths of warfarin tablets. These are colour-coded to help you take the correct dose. You may need a mixture of tablet strengths to make your dose.

Two licensed brands of warfarin are available in Ireland: Warfant® and Teva®. Always try take the same brand of warfarin. Make sure you don't run out of tablets – always have at least a week's supply of all three strengths.

1 mg warfarin tablets are brown

3 mg warfarin tablets are blue

5 mg warfarin tablets are pink

| WARFANT                                                                                         | TEVA                                                                                            |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1mg (brown)  | 1mg (brown)  |
| 3mg (blue)   | 3mg (blue)   |
| 5mg (pink)   | 5mg (pink)   |

**How should I take my warfarin?**

Take your warfarin once a day, at the same time each day and ideally between 17.00 and 19.00. Warfarin can be taken before, during or after a meal.

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**What dose should I take?**

The warfarin dose may change depending on your blood results. The warfarin dose is written in your yellow Anticoagulant Therapy Record Booklet, provided by the warfarin clinic. Ask your doctor, pharmacist or nurse if you are not sure what dose or how many tablets to take.

- **If I miss a dose of warfarin, what do I do?** If you remember within 12 hours of your normal time, take it as soon as you remember. If you don't remember until the next day, leave out the forgotten dose and take the next dose at your normal time.
- **Never take a double dose.** Use a calendar to remind you to take your tablets and to record when you have taken a dose, if you have trouble remembering. If you miss a dose or take an incorrect dose, make a note and tell the clinic when you next have a blood test.

**Monitoring the effect of warfarin**

You need regular blood tests to measure your INR (international normalised ratio). The INR is a measure of how long your blood takes to clot. Your ideal (target) INR is recorded in your Anticoagulant Therapy Record Booklet. It is important to keep your appointments to check your INR. If you cannot attend for a test, contact the warfarin clinic / your doctor to make another appointment without delay.

**Can I take other medicines / herbal remedies / vitamin supplements?**

- Many medicines can interfere with the action of warfarin. ALWAYS tell your doctor, dentist, pharmacist and nurse that you are taking warfarin and check with them before taking any other medicines, herbal remedies or vitamin supplements.
- Inform your doctor / warfarin clinic about any changes to your other medicines as you may need more frequent blood tests.
- Avoid aspirin and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medicines, e.g. ibuprofen, unless prescribed by a doctor who knows that you are taking warfarin. Aspirin is found in many painkillers and flu medicines.
- Buy all your medicines and supplements from a pharmacy and tell the pharmacist you are taking warfarin so they can provide advice. Read the information leaflet in the medicines box.

**Can I drink alcohol while I am taking warfarin?**

Yes but only in moderation. You should not drink more than 2 units of alcohol a day. One pint of beer or two small glasses of wine contain 2 units of alcohol. It is dangerous to 'binge drink' while taking warfarin.

**What about my diet?**

- It is important to eat a well-balanced diet and to keep your diet consistent, so the amount of vitamin K you eat is the same. Foods rich in vitamin K cause warfarin to be less effective. It is not necessary to avoid these foods as they are healthy foods in your diet; eating moderate quantities of these foods on a consistent basis will not affect the action of warfarin.
- Consumption of cranberries and grapefruits (including juices and supplements) should be kept to a minimum.

***It is important to keep your diet consistent. Crash diets, binge eating or other major changes to your diet can affect your warfarin therapy.***



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### How long do I continue taking warfarin for?

It is essential to keep taking warfarin until your doctor tells you to stop. Consult with your doctor / warfarin clinic without delay if you can't take your warfarin for any reason.

### Other precautions

- Avoid activities where you are likely to experience trauma, bruising or bleeding i.e. contact sports.
- If you are having any other treatment from healthcare or complementary therapists, e.g. herbalist, osteopath, physiotherapist, acupuncturist, or anyone administering treatments that can cause bleeding, tell them in advance that you are taking warfarin.

### Are there any side effects from warfarin?

The most serious side effect of warfarin is bleeding. Seek immediate medical attention if you have any problems with bruising, bleeding or any of the following:

- Bleeding from cuts which lasts longer than normal or does not stop by itself
- Prolonged nose bleeds (longer than 10 minutes)
- Blood in sputum, vomit, urine or stools
- Bleeding gums
- For women; heavy or increased bleeding during your period or any other unusual vaginal bleeding
- Jaundice (a yellowing of your skin or whites of your eyes)
- Unexplained bruising
- Major trauma or injury (especially to your head, eyes, joints)
- Chest pain or shortness of breath

Please inform your doctor / warfarin clinic at your next visit if you attended the emergency department. Report any skin reaction and / or change of the skin.

### Please inform the clinic staff of the following:

- Any missed doses or any change in warfarin dose since your last visit to the clinic
- Any change in your existing medicines, or any new medicines including alternative medicines or vitamin supplements
- Any recent illness or admission to hospital
- Any change in lifestyle, e.g. holidays, change in diet
- Any appointments for dental and surgical procedures
- If you do not understand any aspects of your warfarin therapy

### Keep your medicines in a safe place, out of the sight and reach of children.

There is a helpful video on Managing Your Medicines on Discharge from Hospital available on [www.mater.ie](https://vimeo.com/375912976) (Direct Link: <https://vimeo.com/375912976>). Please watch this video to further inform you on managing your medicines on discharge.