



## Warfarin

Medication Name	Brand Name
Warfarin sodium	<input type="radio"/> Coumadin <input type="radio"/> Marevan

### What is it used for?

It is a type of medication called anticoagulant, commonly referred to as a “blood thinner”. It prevents the formation of harmful clots, or excessive clotting that can cause complications such as pulmonary embolus, deep vein thrombosis (DVT) and stroke. Medical conditions, such as irregular heart rhythms, previous strokes or DVT and heart attack, may increase the risk of clotting and be an indication for this medication. You may also be started on warfarin if you have had a valve replacement.

### How to take this medication?

This medication must be taken regularly. If you miss a dose notify your doctor. Take it as soon as you remember, unless it is 8 hours or less until your next dose is due. Then skip that dose and take the next one at the usual time. Do not make up for this dose by taking an extra one. Or follow instructions from your doctor or pathology specialist.

### Do not swap from one brand to the other or combine these brands.

The strength of warfarin tablets does vary and they are in different colours to help people recognise which strength each one is (1mg, 2mg or 5mg). You may take one or a combination of these strengths.

An important part of monitoring the effects of warfarin is having regular blood tests that measure how long your blood takes to clot. This ensures that your warfarin dose is effective while minimising complications. The test is called an INR (International Normalised Ratio). There is a specific range that your doctor will want this to be in which is achieved by monitoring your blood INR and adjusting the amount of warfarin you take according to the results.

### Before taking this medication it is important to tell your doctor if you:

- Are pregnant or plan to get pregnant
- Are breastfeeding
- Planning on having any dental treatment
- Recently had or plan to have any surgical procedures or operations
- Participate in any activities that may result in traumatic injury such as contact sports
- Have had previous reactions to warfarin, including another brand
- If you have bleeding tendencies or abnormal blood cells
- If you have moderate to severe high blood pressure

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Healthy Living NT  
 is the trading name of the  
 Diabetes Association  
 of the Northern Territory  
 Incorporated.

A thorough health/medical check up needs to be done prior to commencing this medication including a discussion of ANY other medications including “over the counter” medications bought from a pharmacy/chemist, health food shop or supermarket.

Warfarin interacts with a large number of medications, vitamin supplements, herbal preparations, alcohol and foods. You need to discuss this in detail with your doctor/health professional to obtain more specific information.

In particular it interacts with Vitamin K which assists with blood clotting in the body. This means foods containing Vitamin K affect how warfarin in the body works.

### **Side Effects**

\*It is important if you experience any symptoms or are feeling unwell once you commence warfarin to notify your doctor or pharmacist. While there are many potential side effects you may not experience any of them. However report any of these if they do occur immediately.

- Bruising (more than usual)
- Red or dark brown urine
- Red or black bowel motions
- Nosebleeds
- Vomiting or coughing up blood
- Bleeding from gums

**This list does not include every possible side effect that can occur. Please refer to the information sheet about your medication or discuss these with your doctor or pharmacist.**

### **Other important information**

- Keep them out of reach of children at all times
- Do not stop taking these tablets without consulting your doctor
- Notify your doctor or health professional immediately if you become unwell or are experiencing any side effects
- Have your INR tests as instructed and take your dose of warfarin according to what you are told by the laboratory or clinic
- You can travel when on warfarin but need to discuss this with your doctor. Portable INR machines are available that can assist you to monitor warfarin levels at home or when travelling.
- If you are unsure about the interaction between warfarin and vitamin K, especially what foods contain vitamin K and how much of these you can eat, please ask for further information from a HLNT cardiac educator or dietician.
- Do not take any new medications, vitamins, herbal supplements or make significant changes to your diet without discussing with your doctor or pharmacist.