

Information on Anti-clotting Drugs

Warfarin

Patient Instructions

- **Key Points**

- Keep your appointments and phone for your results regularly
- Take your dose regularly. It is recommended to take it in the early evening
- Report missed doses in the past 3 days to the phlebotomist when you have your blood collected
- If you experience any bleeding or excessive bruising; report to your doctor or the Emergency Department immediately.

DO NOT WAIT FOR YOUR NEXT BLOOD TEST

- Get advice on over the counter medications from your doctor and the pharmacist and ensure you tell your doctor if you have taken any medication they have not prescribed for you
- Your doctor will decide how long you need to be on this medication for.
- When you need a repeat prescription contact your doctor
- *If you are on Warfarin for atrial fibrillation you may be suitable to change to a funded thrombin inhibitor such as Dabigatran. This does not require blood tests and dose changes. You should discuss this with your GP.*

- **General Information**

Your doctor has put you on the medication **Warfarin** that belongs to a group of drugs known as **anticoagulants**. Although they are sometimes referred to as “blood thinners” anticoagulants do not actually thin the blood – instead they lengthen the time it takes for a blood clot to form. This makes it harder for clots to develop in your blood vessels and keeps existing clots from becoming bigger.

The length of time you will need to take this medication could be weeks, months or even years depending on your condition and how long your doctor thinks you will be at risk for developing clots.

• Potential Serious Side Effects

The most serious potential side effect of Warfarin is **bleeding**; either internal or external. To deal with this possibility, become familiar with these warning signs:

- **Prolonged bleeding from a minor cut**
- **Excessive or unexplained bleeding from gums or nose**
- **Red or rust coloured urine**
- **Black stools or blood in the stools**
- **Tiny, round reddish or purplish spots on your skin**
- **Pain in the chest, abdomen, pelvis or lower back**
- **Unexplained swelling**
- **Dizziness or fainting**
- **Severe or prolonged headaches**

If any of these symptoms develop – notify your Doctor **IMMEDIATELY**. If you are bleeding contact your Doctor or go to the Emergency Department of your local hospital at once.

DO NOT WAIT FOR YOUR REGULAR BLOOD TEST

• Other Medications

Some other medications both prescribed and purchased over the counter, can alter the effect of Warfarin. It is important that you remind your **doctor** that you are on Warfarin when there are any changes to your medicines.

You should also tell your **Pharmacist** whenever you collect either prescribed medicines or over-the-counter medicines and other Health products.

If you have any doubt about the possible effects of other medications or other products please **consult your doctor** before starting.

Vitamin K affects how your body reacts to Warfarin. Don't significantly increase or decrease your consumption of foods rich in this vitamin such as broccoli, cabbage, kale, lettuce, spinach, and green tea. Some yoghurt is supplemented with Vitamin K and should be avoided.

• Blood Test - Key Points

- Keep your appointments and phone for your results regularly
- Take your dose regularly. It is recommended to take it in the early evening
- Report missed doses in the past 3 days to the phlebotomist when you have your blood collected
- If you experience any bleeding or excessive bruising; report to your doctor or the Emergency Department immediately.

DO NOT WAIT FOR YOUR NEXT BLOOD TEST

- Get advice on over the counter medications from your doctor and the pharmacist and ensure you tell your doctor if you have taken any medication they have not prescribed for you
- Your doctor will decide how long you need to be on this medication for
- When you need a repeat prescription contact your doctor
- If you are having dental surgery or an operation consult your doctor or surgeon with regards to your Warfarin requirements
- If you have any further questions discuss them with your doctor
- If you are going away for an extended period of time discuss this with your doctor prior to leaving town
- Telephone after 3:00 pm, (if you have had a blood test prior to 1:00 pm) or the next day, (if you had a blood test post 1:00 pm) for your dose and next appointment
- If you forget to ring – continue to take the prescribed dose and phone next morning for your dose and next appointment. We will ring you only if there is a significant change to your dose

• Blood Test – General Information

A blood (**INR**) test is performed to determine the dosage of Warfarin that is right for you. A sample of blood is tested to see how many seconds it takes for a clot to form. Blood tests will be required frequently when you first start taking Warfarin – whilst your body is getting use to the medication, and then at regular intervals for the duration of treatment. This is necessary because many factors can change the way our body responds to Warfarin over time, including diet, illness or other medications.

If your **INR** changes the dosage of **Warfarin** may need to be adjusted, without such an adjustment the medication either might not be effective or could lead to serious complications.

Your dose is charted by **Pathologists** on the assumption that you have **taken the medication** as ordered since your last test. You will need to fill out a form telling us what dose you have been on since your last test.

PLEASE MAKE SURE YOU KNOW YOUR CURRENT DOSE BEFORE ARRIVING AT THE ROOMS FOR YOUR TEST

Any missed doses should be notified to the phlebotomist who will include this information on your request form. We also need to know if you have started any **new medicines** in the previous **3 days**; this allows the test to be interpreted and the dose to be charted correctly.

To have a blood test you can go to one of the **Medlab Central** or **Tlab rooms**.

If you have a blood test prior to 1:00 pm phone to check your dose and find out when your next appointment will be. If you have your blood test after 1:00 pm continue with the same dose of medication and phone the next day for your dose and next appointment.

If the Pathologists make significant changes to your dose Medlab staff will phone you directly with your change of dose.

It is advisable to take the Warfarin at the **same time each day** to keep the level consistent; we recommend you take the dose in the **early evening** so that the test records the full effect of the last dose.