

# Taking Coumadin® at Home

Your doctor has prescribed Coumadin® (also called warfarin) for you. By reducing your blood's ability to clot, this medication prevents harmful clots from forming in your blood vessels. Coumadin® won't dissolve clots that you already have, but it should stop clots from growing larger and traveling, preventing complications like stroke or a blood clot to the lungs.

## How to take Coumadin®

Take Coumadin® only as your doctor directs. Don't take more or less and don't take it more often or longer than he/she directs. Take it at the same time each day, preferably in the evening between 6 and 7 p.m. This way, your doctor has time to call you with any changes in your dose. *The dosage is determined by regular testing of your blood to see how many seconds it takes for your blood to clot.*

## What you should know about where your blood is being tested

If having home blood draws, a nurse or lab technician will be taking a tube of your blood to a laboratory for testing. Take special note of the name and phone number of the laboratory where your blood is to be taken. Your doctor may need this information and call you if he/she did not receive the report. You should note the following:

### 1. The name and phone number of the lab your blood will be taken to:

---

### 2. The name and phone number of the agency drawing your blood:

---

## What to do if you miss a dose

If you forget to take your Coumadin®, call your doctor for instructions. If you miss an entire day, don't take the missed dose at all and NEVER take a double dose as this may cause bleeding.

## Report any signs of bleeding

Notify your doctor if you have any of the following symptoms: bleeding gums when you brush your teeth, bruising or purplish marks on your skin, coughing up blood, nosebleed, vomiting, prolonged bleeding or oozing from a cut or wound, red or black tarry stools, red or dark brown urine, excessive or unexpected menstrual flow, unusual pain or swelling in your abdomen with excessive thirst. Notify your doctor if any illness develops or if you have unusual pain or swelling in your joints, unusual backaches, diarrhea, constipation, dizziness or a severe headache.

### Dietary Information

**Do not adjust your diet.** Certain foods high in vitamin K can interfere with Coumadin's® effectiveness but your dosage will be regulated around your usual dietary intake. Foods high in vitamin K are beef liver, chicken liver, pork liver, green teas, broccoli, kale, spinach, cauliflower, garbanzo beans (chick peas), collard or mustard greens, lentils, cabbage and lettuce, especially Romaine lettuce.

**Herbal precautions:** Avoid garlic, ginko, ginger, feverfew, dong quai or teas with coumarin as bleeding times can be affected. This may not be a complete list of herbals. Check with your pharmacist for updated information on herbal interactions.

**Limit alcohol to one drink per day** as this can affect Coumadin® levels.

## Special Directions

- If you are to have your blood tested at an outpatient laboratory or doctor's office, remember to keep your appointments. If the test shows that your blood is not clotting within a therapeutic range, your doctor may want to adjust the dose.
- Reduce risk of injury. Always wear shoes. Place a nonskid mat in your bathtub. Shave with an electric razor. Use a soft toothbrush. Avoid risky activities like rough-housing with children or pets or cutting hard-to-slice items such as lemons, tomatoes or bagels.
- Inform your doctors and your dentist that you are taking Coumadin® before undergoing any treatment.
- Wear a medical ID bracelet that states you are taking Coumadin®.
- Check with your doctor before doing any strenuous exercise.
- Check with your doctor before starting a trip.
- Notify your doctor immediately if you become pregnant. If you are considering becoming pregnant, think about delaying pregnancy or discuss it with your doctor. Coumadin® can impair your baby's development and cause placental bleeding.
- Check with your doctor before taking any vitamin preparation, cold or cough medicine, laxative or pain medicine. Aspirin, ibuprofen and other aspirin-like products may increase the likelihood of bleeding. Tylenol® (acetaminophen) can also intensify Coumadin's® action.
- Remember to let all of your doctors know about every medicine you are taking, including over-the-counter drugs, birth control pills, vitamins, herbals and other supplements.

**HEALTHY HEARTS PROGRAM**  
Women's Heart Foundation, PO Box 7827, W. Trenton, NJ 08628

