
Outpatient Anticoagulant Service

Oral anticoagulant therapy

What are anticoagulants?

An anticoagulant medicine prevents harmful blood clots from forming in your blood vessels. It makes your blood take longer to clot. Warfarin is the most commonly used oral anticoagulant in this country. Others that may be used include dabigatran and rivaroxaban and they are taken in the same way as warfarin.

How do I take my anticoagulant?

- Warfarin is taken once a day, at about the same time, preferably on an empty stomach.
- If you miss one dose of warfarin, or take a different dose to that recommended, please write it in the 'important information' section of your anticoagulant records sheet and go back to your normal dose the next day.
- Repeat prescriptions for warfarin may be obtained from your GP.
- Ensure that you have all three strengths of warfarin tablets (1mg, 3mg and 5mg).

Do I need monitoring while taking anticoagulants?

Yes, you need to have a blood test called an INR. INR stands for International Normalised Ratio. This is a standard test that measures how long your blood takes to clot. (Normal blood has an INR of approximately 1). The warfarin dose that you need to take will depend on your INR test result. If your result is out of the range appropriate to your condition, the warfarin dose will be increased or decreased accordingly. The warfarin dose required to achieve the target INR set varies for each individual.

How does Addenbrookes Anticoagulation Service run?

- The blood sample for INR testing is taken at either your GP's surgery or the Blood Testing Department in Outpatients at Addenbrooke's; it depends which one is more convenient for you.

- Your yellow Anticoagulation Record sheet is divided into two sections: the top section is your records, and the bottom section is the request form for your next INR blood test.
- It is important that the yellow INR and anticoagulation dosage request form (the bottom part of the form) always accompanies your blood sample for INR testing. It is sent to the Coagulation Laboratory in Addenbrooke's, by the staff taking the blood.
- Your INR test result, dose recommendation and date by which you should have the next INR test will be printed onto the top section of your anticoagulation record sheet. This yellow sheet will be sent to you by first class post.
- Please arrange for your blood tests Monday to Thursday only.
- Initially you will have a weekly INR test; however when your INR is within your intended range you will have longer intervals between INR testing.

Are there any side effects?

The most serious side effect of warfarin is **bleeding**. If you experience any of the following signs consult your GP and have an INR test:

- Nosebleeds
- Bloodshot eye(s)
- Blood in vomit
- Blood in sputum
- Passing blood in your urine or stool
- Severe or spontaneous bruising.

If you cut yourself, apply firm pressure to the site for at least five minutes using a clean, dry dressing.

Seek medical advice **immediately** if you suffer a major injury or are unable to stop the bleeding.

What can affect the control of my anticoagulation?

Other medicines

- Almost any drug can interact with warfarin.
- When buying over the counter drugs, including alternative remedies, tell the pharmacist that you are taking warfarin. They will advise you which medicines are safe to take with warfarin.
- If you start any new medication while you are taking warfarin we recommend you have a blood test five to seven days after starting the new medication. In this way we can ensure that your INR remains within the desired range.

- If you have a course of antibiotics you should have an INR test within three days of starting them.
- You should not take aspirin unless it has specifically been prescribed by your doctor.
- It is also advisable to **avoid** non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs like **diclofenac** or **ibuprofen**.
- Paracetamol and codeine based painkillers are acceptable.

Diet

- It is important to eat a well balanced diet, keep to a regular diet.
- Be aware that any major changes in your diet may affect how your body takes up warfarin.
- Foods rich in vitamin K may affect your INR result. These foods are important in your diet but eating them in large amounts may lower your INR results.
- Foods high in vitamin K include green leafy vegetables, chick peas, liver, egg yolks, and cereals containing wheat bran and oats, mature cheese, blue cheese, avocado, olive oil.
- Please have an INR test if you make any major changes in your diet of more than seven days.

Alcohol

We recommend that you do not exceed the national guidelines which are up to 21 units for a man and up to 14 units a weeks for a woman. (One pint of beer is two units; one pub measure of wine is one unit). It is dangerous to 'binge' drink while taking warfarin.

Who must I tell that I take anticoagulant therapy?

- Tell any doctor prescribing your medicine that you currently take warfarin.
- Tell your dentist.
- Tell any health worker involved in your medical care.
- Please carry with you the alert cards or your anticoagulant record sheet, which indicate that you are taking warfarin.

Advice for women

- Our service recommends that women do not conceive while taking warfarin. Please consult your Family Planning Clinic regarding contraception. If you think you may be pregnant contact your GP immediately for advice.
- You may breast feed while taking warfarin.
- You may experience heavier periods while you are taking warfarin.

Our aim is to anticoagulate you safely and effectively.

Please ask if you require this information in other languages, large print or audio format:
01223 216032 or patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Potete chiedere di ottenere queste informazioni in altre lingue, in stampato grande o in audiocassetta.

Italian

若你需要本信息的繁體中文、大字體或音訊格式的版本，請要求索取。

Cantonese

તમને આ માહિતી બીજી ભાષાઓમાં, મોટા અક્ષરોમાં અથવા સાંભળી શકાય એવા માધ્યમ (ઓડીઓ ફોર્મેટ)માં જોઈતી હોય તો કૃપા કરીને પૂછો.

Gujarati

تکایہ پرسیار بکے نہ گھر نہ وزانیاریہت دہوی بہ زمانیکی تر , بہ پیتی گہورہ یانیش بہ شیوہی دہنگ

Kurdish

آگر آپ کو یہ معلومات دوسری زبانوں میں، بڑے الفاظ کی اشاعت میں یا آڈیو ٹیپ پر درکار ہوں تو براہ مہربانی اس کیلئے درخواست کریں۔

Urdu



Addenbrooke's is smoke-free. Please do not smoke anywhere on the site.

For advice on quitting, contact your GP or the NHS smoking helpline free, 0800 169 0 169

Document history

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