

There are two brands of warfarin in New Zealand - Marevan© and Coumadin©. Both brands come in three different strengths. Marevan and Coumadin are slightly different from each other, therefore it is important that you always stick to the same brand.

Check with pharmacist if:

- your tablets are different from usual (e.g. different colour, strength or brand).
- you are unsure about when to take your warfarin or what dose to take.

When should I take my tablets?

Take your tablets as one dose, once a day, at the same time every day.

Taking your tablets in the evening is best. This means when your blood test is due you can get the test done in the morning. (The test is usually done about 12 hours after taking a tablet).

To help you keep track of whether you have taken your tablet, mark each day on the calendar supplied as you take your dose, or use a medication organiser. Note: warfarin can be taken with or without food.

What if I forget a dose?

Take a missed dose as soon as you can remember, if it is the same day that you were to take the dose. Do not take a double dose the next day to make up for a missed dose.

Tell your doctor about the missed dose

It is important to tell your doctor about a missed dose. Your doctor will need to take the missed dose into account when looking at your blood test results.

Tell your doctor, pharmacist or other health professional that you are taking warfarin

Many medicines, (prescribed and those bought from your pharmacy or supermarket), herbal products, natural products and food supplements can alter the effect of warfarin and increase the risk of bleeding. Always tell your health professional that you are taking warfarin so that they can check if it is safe to take a medicine or natural product with warfarin.

If you are prescribed warfarin make sure your doctor is aware of all the medicines and natural products you are already taking.

Having blood tests

You need to have regular blood tests while you are on warfarin. The blood test is called the INR test (International Normalised Ratio, and measures the speed your blood clots). Your doctor will tell you what INR you should be aiming for, what warfarin dose you need, and how often you need an INR blood test. Follow your practice's guidance on when to take your test, and how you will receive the results.

How long will I need to take warfarin?

It depends on your condition. Your doctor will tell you how long you need to be on warfarin.

When to seek medical advice

Call your doctor if you have:

- unusual bruising or bleeding
- fever, infection
- vomiting, diarrhoea
- unexplained pain
- loss of appetite for 2-3 days
- blood in urine or faeces (black bowel motions)
- changes to your skin (e.g. a rash or itching)

Eat a balanced diet

Normal day to day variations in your diet will not interfere with your warfarin treatment. However, significant

changes in the foods you eat or dieting may have an effect. For example large amounts vegetables containing vitamin K (e.g. broccoli) may alter the effect of warfarin. Before making changes to your diet talk to your health professional.

Take care with alcohol

More than two standard drinks per day can increase the risk of bleeding.

Pregnancy

Talk to your doctor if you take warfarin and think you might be pregnant, or if you want to have a baby. Warfarin is considered safe to use when breastfeeding.

What else do I need to know?

- Always tell your health practitioners that you take warfarin.
- Always tell your health practitioner about any medicines or alternative treatments that you are taking.
- Use a soft toothbrush if your gums bleed easily.
- Avoid activities where you might get hurt easily and bleed too much, e.g. contact sports.
- Do not get new tattoos or piercings.

