

PURPOSE:

To provide a tool for the provider teaching patients requiring anticoagulation therapy

OBJECTIVE:

This tool should be used only as a guide for teaching patients about the how and why of taking warfarin. The information given to the patient and the teaching to be done will be determined by the patient and his or her response to the information.

REMEMBER:

Anticoagulation teaching is an ongoing process

- Begin teaching after the provider has assessed the patient's needs and level of understanding
- Allow for questions and correct misunderstandings as you progress
- Throughout the teaching sessions, continue to assess what the patient wants to know, what the patient needs to know, and how the patient interprets the explanations given
- Be sure to document what has been taught, the patient's response, and any fears or concerns that the patient verbalizes

TEACHING ASPECTS
1. Assessment of patient's knowledge Content: To provide baseline for information giving and to assess the patient's level of understanding. The following questions can be used: <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Do you know why you're taking warfarin (ie atrial fibrillation, mechanical valve, left ventricular thrombus, deep vein thrombosis, pulmonary emboli)?■ What kinds of symptoms do you need to watch for?■ Do you have any problems with taking medications?
2. Anatomy and Physiology Pertinent to Anticoagulation Content: <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Blood clotting, or coagulation, is a normal body process that keeps you from bleeding too much■ There are many factors that both increase and decrease clot formation■ When you develop a blood clot, or thrombus, your blood clots too easily or is too thick■ For patients with atrial fibrillation: Your heart beats irregularly so that not all of the blood gets pumped with each beat. Some of it just sits around. When this happens, there is an increased risk of clot formation
3. Explanation of Warfarin Content: <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Warfarin is a drug that prevents your blood from clotting too easily. If you do, or did, have a clot, this drug will prevent it from getting any bigger or prevent any more clots from forming.■ Warfarin tablets are color coded with the dose inscribed on them.
4. Need for Regular Blood Tests Content: Before starting to take warfarin, you will have a blood test to check your prothrombin time (PT) and corresponding International Normalized Ratio (INR). From these results, the decision is made as to how much warfarin you will take. After you start, the only way to measure the level of warfarin is by testing your blood regularly and frequently. Initially, you will be coming once a week. After your medication is adjusted, the longest you will go without a blood test is four weeks
5. Use of Warfarin with Other Medications Content: <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Many drugs can affect how well the warfarin will or will not work■ Don't take any medication without first checking with your physician or nurse■ Inform the clinic whenever you start or stop a medication■ You should be careful about any drugs (even if you've taken them before), such as aspirin containing medications, nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAID's), or OTC drugs.

TRUMAN MEDICAL CENTER
GUIDE FOR TEACHING PATIENTS ON ANTICOAGULATION THERAPY

6. Symptoms to report

Content: Just as your blood can be too thick, it can also be too thin, which indicates that your blood level of warfarin is too high. You might be able to tell by the following symptoms and should call the clinic immediately:

- Red or brown urine
- Tarry black bowel movements
- Increased menstrual bleeding
- Feeling dizzy, faint, or weak
- Nosebleeds
- Bleeding from any place on your body
- Easy bruising or black and blue spots
- Swollen joints or large swelling from a bump

You should also call the clinic should you become ill in any way (ie infection, virus, diarrhea)

7. Pregnancy

Content: You should not become pregnant while on warfarin because it can cause abnormalities in an unborn child. Should you discover you are pregnant, call the clinic immediately. Feel free to discuss birth control with the clinic staff.

8. Missed pills

Content: If you forget a pill, don't double the next day's dose to make up for it. Do try and make taking the pill part of your daily routine (ie with your evening meal)

9. Time of Day to Take Pill

Content: You should take your pill the same time every day. We recommend taking it in the evening so that, on the days your blood is checked, we will have time to change your dosage if necessary. It is not necessary to take your pill with food.

10. Dietary Considerations

Content:

- Use of alcohol should be avoided because it prolongs the action of warfarin and can make your blood "thinner". If you feel that not using alcohol can be a problem, please let us know.
- Consistency and limitations on foods high in vitamin K should be emphasized. High intake of vitamin K will necessitate a higher dose of warfarin. A consistent low to moderate intake of vitamin K foods should be encouraged.

11. Preoperative/Other Providers/Emergency Treatment

Content:

- Should you need to see another physician or dentist for anything, be sure to tell the physician or dentist that you are taking warfarin.
- If you need to have surgery, contact the clinic for further instructions on your warfarin

12. Identification Card

Content:

- This card has the physician's name, clinic telephone number, and the name of the drug on it. You should have this on your person at all times. This is so you will always have the name of the drug should you forget it, and so you can inform anyone who needs to treat you medically.
- Medic-Alert tag, necklace or bracelet, indicating that the anticoagulant warfarin is being taken

13. Medication Instructions

Content:

- You should receive directions for taking your warfarin each time you have your blood drawn. Based on your test results, you will be told the amount of warfarin to take each day. If you have any questions or concerns about your dose, do not hesitate to contact us.
- You will also receive instructions for when to get a repeat PT/INR based on your test results

TRUMAN MEDICAL CENTER
GUIDE FOR TEACHING PATIENTS ON ANTICOAGULATION THERAPY

14. Call-Back/Contact System

Content: Depending on where your blood is drawn, you might be instructed to call back for results and instructions or return to the clinic to wait for results. If you can't call back, attempts will be made to reach you or leave a message. In case of an emergency when you cannot be reached by telephone, we will contact your emergency backup number. If you have not received your results, continue taking your warfarin as prescribed and call the clinic for your instructions and follow-up appointment.

15. Activities of Daily Living

Content:

- You should be particularly careful about doing things in which you might injure yourself. For example, be careful using sharp knives; use an electric razor instead of a regular blade for shaving; and remove or protect hazards in your home, such as sharp objects that you could walk into. For those of you who are sports-minded, avoid rough contact sports.
- Increasing physical activity can increase the PT/INR

16. Travel

Content: If you plan on being away for any length of time, let us know so arrangements can be made. You might need extra pills to take with you, or might need to have your blood checked at your travel destination. If you are going abroad, you need to discuss this in case your dosing schedule needs adjustment because of time zone differences.