

Warfarin



Hematology/Oncology Clinic
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What Is Warfarin Used For?

Warfarin is commonly known as a “blood thinner.” It increases the time it takes for the blood to clot. Another name for it is “coumadin.” Warfarin is often given to children after heart surgery. It works to prevent the formation of blood clots in artificial heart valves and blood vessels.

Ask your doctor to explain why warfarin has been prescribed for your child if you need more information.

How Should I Give This Medication To My Child?

Warfarin is available in tablet form only. If your child is unable to swallow a tablet, crush and add it to a small amount of food on a spoon.

Give the medication exactly as prescribed. Try not to forget doses. Have your child take medication at a regular time every day. Link it with something that you always do like eating breakfast or brushing teeth. If you record on a calendar when you have given your child's daily dose, this serves as a check and a reminder.

If My Child Misses A Dose, What Should I Do?

If you remember a missed dose later the same day, give it immediately and continue with the next dose as usual. If you don't remember until the next day, give only that day's dose. **NEVER give a double dose (two doses at the same time) to make up for a missed dose.** If your child has missed a dose call the Thrombosis Nurse or Hematologist.

If My Child Vomits The Dose, What Should I Do?

If your child vomits within 30 minutes of the dose being given then repeat the dose. If your child vomits after 30 min of the dose being given, do not repeat the dose. In all cases or if you are unsure of what to do, call the Thrombosis Nurse or Hematologist.

Monitoring Warfarin Levels:

There must be a certain level of warfarin in the blood in order for it to prevent clots without “thinning” the blood too much. The level of warfarin in the blood is determined by tests which measure the length of time it takes for the blood to clot. This test is called the INR.

Blood tests are done after your child is discharged from the hospital. They may be done every few days and then less frequently once the warfarin levels become stable. Blood tests can be done at a local lab. You need to contact the Hematology Clinic when the blood test is done so that we can check for results. The Hematology Clinic will advise you of the results and any necessary dose changes within 1-2 days of the blood test. If you don't receive a call in 1-2 days you should call the Hematology Clinic again.

Your child's safe and effective use of warfarin requires regular monitoring. Viral Infections may cause the INR to be elevated. Let the Thrombosis Nurse know if your child has a viral infection at the time of a blood test.

Children may “outgrow” their prescribed dose during growth spurts.

Keep all follow-up appointments so that your doctor can monitor the effectiveness of your child's dose.

What Substances Affect The Action Of Warfarin?

Aspirin™ and Ibuprofen™ thin the blood. Therefore; they will increase the risk of bleeding in a child taking warfarin.

Many cold remedies and non-prescription medicines contain aspirin™. Check with your doctor or pharmacist before giving your child any other medications.

Vitamin K, in large amounts, may interfere with warfarin's ability to prevent blood clots. Green leafy vegetables are the richest source of vitamin K, so your child should eat approximately the same

amount of green leafy vegetables each day.

Liquid nutritional supplements may alter the effectiveness of warfarin.

Encourage your child to eat a variety of foods rather than large quantities of any single food. Check with your doctor or dietitian for specific information about other foods and supplements which may interact with warfarin.

Alcohol affects the action of warfarin and, in excess, increases the risk of injuries.

What Safety Measures Should I Take While My Child Is On Warfarin?

Because warfarin increases the time it takes for blood to clot, your child will bleed more easily. Any bump or bang may cause a bruise (bleeding under the skin). Bruising is hard to avoid when your child is taking warfarin.

Take Special Care With The Following Daily Routines:

- Care of teeth: use a soft toothbrush and floss gently
- Care of feet: wear shoes or slippers that fit well to prevent blisters, cuts and falls
- Shaving (for adolescents): electric razors are best to prevent cuts and nicks
- Bathing/showering: a rubber mat in the tub or shower helps prevent falls

Take Care With The Following Activities:

- Household and handyman activities using sharp tools
- Kitchen activities using knives, peelers, and other sharp instruments

Your child can participate in most activities. However, we suggest that your child discuss activities like skiing and contact sports like soccer, hockey, football and wrestling with the Thrombosis Nurse or your Hematologist in case there is a need to restrict these.

Control Bleeding:

When your child gets a cut, it will bleed for longer than usual. Apply pressure directly to the cut with your fingers until the bleeding stops. This should take about 5 minutes.

Inform Others:

It is a good idea for your child to wear a Medic-Alert™ bracelet to indicate that he/she is on warfarin. Also, tell your child's dentist, doctors, and school health nurse about the warfarin. Then, in the event of a medical emergency, health care providers will know to take the necessary steps to protect against bleeding.

Do not give your child any new prescription or non-prescription medicines without telling your hematologist first.

Contact Your Doctor If You Notice Unusual Signs Of Bleeding Such As:

- Large bruises
- Cuts which don't stop bleeding after 10 minutes of direct pressure
- Red or dark-brown colored urine
- Red or black stools
- Frequent or prolonged nose bleeds
- Coughing up blood
- Unexplained, severe, or prolonged stomach pain

Contact Information:

Thrombosis Nurse:
604-875-2345 ext 7058

Hematology/Oncology Clinic:
604-875-2116
Mon-Fri 8:00 am—5:00 pm

After hours/Weekends:
604-875-2161 (Paging)
Ask to speak with the hematologist on call.