

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 dinner 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 goes home from the hospital. They may be done weekly and then less often 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. If you don't receive a call in 1-2 days you should call the Hematology Clinic again.

What affects the action of Warfarin?

Many drugs including, Aspirin™ and Ibuprofen™, steroids, heart medication and anticonvulsants affect the action of Warfarin. They may increase the risk of bleeding.

Inform the Thrombosis Nurse of all medications that your child is taking.

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 about 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 Thrombosis Nurse for specific information about other foods and supplements which may interact with warfarin.

Alcohol affects the action of warfarin. Drinking too much also increases the risk of injuries.

Illnesses like the flu can increase your child's INR blood test. Call your Thrombosis Nurse or Hematologist if your child is ill.

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, which is 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 youth). Use an electric razor as it is best at preventing cuts and nicks
- Bathing or showering. Use a rubber mat in the tub or shower to 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 do 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 before doing them.

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. If the bleeding continues call the Thrombosis Nurse or Hematologist.

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.

Contact your doctor if you notice any of the following:

Less obvious signs of bleeding:

- Pink, red or dark brown urine
- Red or tarry black bowel movements
- Joint, muscle, stomach or back pain
- Swelling or discomfort
- Coughing up or vomiting material that looks like coffee grounds
- Unusual headaches
- Dizziness / weakness
- Feeling more tired than usual or looking pale
- Difficulty breathing
- Sudden changes in speech or vision

Obvious signs of bleeding

- Bleeding from cuts that won't stop after applying pressure for 10 minutes
- Bleeding from the nose, gums or ears
- Menstrual bleeding that is heavier or lasts longer than usual
- Coughing up or vomiting blood

Unusual bruising

- Bruises that appear without reason or become swollen or larger over time
- Purplish/red spots on your skin



Who do I call for help?

Thrombosis Nurse:

604-875-2345 ext 7058

Hematology/Oncology Clinic:

604-875-2116

Monday to Friday 8:00 morning to 5:00 afternoon

After hours/Weekends:

604-875-2161

Ask to speak with the hematologist on call.

It's Good to Ask!