

Warfarin Therapy & Atrial Fibrillation Anticoagulant Service

An information guide



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What is Atrial Fibrillation?

Atrial fibrillation is an irregular heart beat. The condition becomes increasingly common over the age of sixty. It can sometimes cause symptoms such as shortness of breath and palpitations.

How is it treated?

Your consultant will have prescribed the best medication for you. One of the drugs you have been prescribed is Warfarin. This leaflet gives some information about Warfarin and will hopefully answer any questions you may have.

Why do I need to take Warfarin?

Due to your heart beating irregularly, there is a risk of a small clot forming in one of the heart chambers, which may lead to a stroke. Warfarin will greatly reduce the chances of this happening.

How does Warfarin work?

Warfarin is sometimes called a blood thinner, but its technical term is an anticoagulant. Warfarin works by slowing down the blood's clotting mechanism, which helps prevent the formation of clots within the heart.

How do I take my Warfarin?

Warfarin comes in tablet form. They are colour-coded according to their strength. You will get your next prescription from your GP. Each person responds differently to Warfarin so your dose may need to be changed at times.

How will I know what dose to take?

In order to determine the correct dose for you, regular blood samples will need to be taken and tested in clinic. The result and dose will be recorded in your yellow anticoagulant record book.

Each person responds differently to Warfarin, therefore your dosage may need to be changed if you have altered your other medication, including having a course of antibiotics.

It is important that you inform your anticoagulant clinic immediately if any of these changes occur. Herbal remedies can also interfere with Warfarin. Do not take any herbal medicines without discussing it first with your anticoagulant clinic.

What are the side effects?

The only major side effect is bleeding. However, this is unlikely if you follow the instructions.

You should contact your GP immediately if you:

- Sustain an injury to your head, eyes or joints
- Bleed excessively after a cut. Bleed from the nose or gums
- Vomit blood or materials that look like “coffee grounds”
- Pass red or dark brown urine, red or black stools
- Experience any major health changes.

What if I cut myself?

If you cut yourself press on the wound with a clean cloth for 5 minutes. The bleeding should stop after this time. If bleeding persists you may need to contact your local A&E department.

Key Points to Remember

- Take your Warfarin and go for your blood tests as instructed
- If you are prescribed new medication or stop any current medication then please inform the Anticoagulant clinic. Please remind your doctor that you are taking Warfarin if he/she needs to prescribe any new medication for you
- Carry your anticoagulant book with you at all times and bring it to every clinic appointment
- Limit your daily alcohol intake and have regular drink free days. Do not binge drink. Do not exceed the recommended weekly units of alcohol
- Take your Warfarin at the same time each day, preferably at tea time. This means that if the dose needs to be changed or stopped at any time, you will not have already taken it that day
- Never take more than the stated dose. If you think you have missed a dose then carry on with your normal dose but do inform the Anticoagulant clinic at your next appointment
- If you have any queries regarding your treatment, please contact the anti-coagulant clinic.

Notes:

If English is not your first language and you need help, please contact the Interpretation and Translation Service

Jeśli angielski nie jest twoim pierwszym językiem i potrzebujesz pomocy, skontaktuj się z działem tłumaczeń ustnych i pisemnych

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Dacă engleza nu este prima ta limbă și ai nevoie de ajutor, te rugăm să contactezi Serviciul de interpretare și traducere

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For advice on stopping smoking contact the Specialist Stop Smoking Service on 01706 517 522

For general enquiries please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 0161 604 5897


For enquiries regarding clinic appointments, clinical care and treatment please contact 0161 624 0420 and the Switchboard Operator will put you through to the correct department / service

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