

Eating Guidelines for People Taking Warfarin Anticoagulants (Coumadin®)

This handout will help you to plan your diet when taking warfarin anticoagulants (Coumadin®). It's important to eat a balanced diet, but when you take warfarin, there are some extra things to consider.



Steps you can take

Vitamin K

Vitamin K plays an important role in blood clotting. You need some vitamin K in your diet every day for good health. You don't have to avoid vitamin K rich foods. In fact, vitamin K rich foods are generally very nutritious. If you eat vitamin K rich foods, it is important to eat about the same amount each day. The foods highest in vitamin K are green, leafy vegetables.

The high vitamin K foods in the chart below each provide about the same amount of vitamin K when eaten in the amounts listed. For example 1 cup of coleslaw will be about the same as eating 6 sprigs of parsley. Have the same number of foods from this list each day. You can have more than one serving of these foods each day but remember to be consistent. If you like to have a green salad at lunch, and a cooked green vegetable at dinner, stay with this pattern every day. If you do not normally eat these foods, do not suddenly eat a large amount of them.

<i>Food</i>	<i>Amount</i>
Asparagus, cooked	½ cup (4 spears)
Broccoli, cooked	½ cup
Brussel sprouts, cooked	½ cup (6 sprouts)
Butterhead lettuce	1 cup
Coleslaw	1 cup
Endive, raw	1 cup
Green leaf lettuce	1 cup
Parsley	6 sprigs
Romaine lettuce	1 cup
Sauerkraut	1 cup
Spinach egg noodles, cooked	1 cup
Spinach, raw	1 cup
Spring or scallion onions, raw	½ cup

Cooked beet greens, collards, turnip greens, kale and spinach are very high in vitamin K and have more vitamin K than the other foods on the above list. If you like these vegetables and want to eat them regularly, talk with a registered dietitian or other healthcare professional. Natto (a fermented soybean product) is so high in vitamin K that it is recommended that you avoid it completely.

Other Tips

When you start taking warfarin, consistently eat your usual amount of high vitamin K foods while your doctor finds the right warfarin dose for you. Tell your doctor if you change your vitamin K food pattern, so your INR (blood clotting tests) can be checked more often.

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This information is not meant to replace advice from your medical doctor or individual counseling with a registered dietitian. It is intended for educational and informational purposes only.

The amount of vitamin K in your diet could change if:

- You eat more vegetables (for example, you go on a diet to lose weight or you eat more vegetables in the spring and summer.)
- You get the flu and cannot eat solid foods for a few days.
- You have been in the hospital on a limited diet (due to surgery or illness) and return home to your normal diet.
- You travel to a place where the foods are different.

Other foods or drinks to watch for:

Grapefruit, Seville or tangelo oranges and grapefruit juice

- Although these fruits and their juices are not high in vitamin K, they can affect how warfarin works in other ways. Avoid them unless your doctor or pharmacist says they are safe for you.

Mango, avocado, ginger, garlic, green tea and chamomile tea

- Although these foods and teas are not high in vitamin K, there have been a few reports that mango, avocado, ginger, garlic, green tea and chamomile tea have changed how warfarin works. These foods and teas have not been shown to have this effect in everyone. Moderate use should not be a problem. Tell your doctor if you eat or drink large amounts of any of these.

Cranberry juice and cranberry supplements

- In the past it was thought that cranberry juice changed the way warfarin works, but more recent research has not found this. If you often drink large amounts of cranberry juice (more than 600 mL (20 oz) each day), or take cranberry supplements, you should talk with your doctor, who may want to check your INR levels more often. An occasional small glass of cranberry juice should not be a problem.

Alcohol

- As a general rule, moderate alcohol intake is safe for people taking warfarin. But the amount you can safely drink depends on your body size and medical conditions. Check with your doctor for guidelines that are right for you.
- Moderate alcohol intake is a maximum of 2 drinks per day, with a limit of 14 or fewer drinks per week for men and 9 or fewer drinks per week for women. One standard drink is one 360 mL (12 oz) bottle of beer, one 150 mL (5 oz) glass of wine, or one 50 mL (1.5 oz) serving of spirits, or one 85 mL (3 oz) serving of sherry or port.

Vitamin and Mineral Supplements

- Vitamin E may change how warfarin works. The amount in a multivitamin supplement or in foods is not a problem, but if you wish to take larger amounts of vitamin E, discuss this with your doctor first.
- Some calcium supplements contain vitamin K. If you take these, it's important to take the same number each day. If you are unsure about whether or not you should be taking these supplements, talk with a registered dietitian, pharmacist or doctor.
- If you take a multivitamin/mineral supplement, it's a good idea to take this consistently, every day.

Natural Health Products

- Be very cautious with ALL natural health products while taking warfarin. They may have effects on warfarin action that have not yet been reported. Tell your doctor about any natural health products such as nutritional supplements (including ginseng, garlic pills, ginger pills, flax seed oil and fish oils) and herbal medicines (including herbal teas) you take. If you are already taking any of these regularly and are stabilized on warfarin, do not stop taking them without letting your doctor know.



Notes

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