

Managing Your Diet While on Warfarin (Coumadin®)

The goal of anticoagulant therapy is to decrease the risk of blood clots which can lead to a heart attack.

Many factors can affect the absorption of warfarin, the most common anticoagulant medication, including certain foods and nutrients. However, a healthy diet can be achieved and maintained while on anticoagulant medications. Keeping your diet consistent is one of the best ways to help your medication work at its best. Avoid any major changes (too much or too little) of the foods you eat. It's also important to inform your physician or healthcare professional about changes in your eating patterns or use of any dietary supplements. The purpose of this handout is to empower you with the knowledge necessary to make proper food choices while on warfarin.

Vitamin K

Vitamin K is needed to help the blood to clot and prevent bleeding. Formerly, patients were cautioned to avoid all foods with Vitamin K while on warfarin, but this is no longer the case. Current recommendations advise patients to consume a consistent dietary intake of Vitamin K as part of their normal eating pattern and to avoid large increases or decreases in the amount of foods high in Vitamin K. It is suggested that patients consume the following serving sizes in the recommended daily amounts while on warfarin:

- **No more than 1 serving** of these foods **high** in Vitamin K: 1/2 cup cooked kale, cooked spinach, cooked turnip greens, cooked collards, cooked mustard greens, 1/4 cup raw parsley
- **No more than 3 servings** of these foods **moderately high** in Vitamin K: 1/2 cup cooked Brussels sprouts, 1 cup raw spinach, raw romaine, raw endive, green leaf lettuce, raw broccoli

Cranberries

A few anecdotal case reports, primarily in the UK, have suggested a possible interaction between cranberry and warfarin, which is referenced in some medication guides. However, reviews of the medical literature, and more importantly the clinical evidence-based research, has shown that daily consumption of 4-8 ounces of cranberry juice cocktail is highly unlikely to cause an interaction. Therefore it is not necessary for the vast majority of patients to completely avoid cranberry juice or other cranberry products. However, nutrition recommendations are highly individualized and as recommended, patients taking warfarin should have their INRs monitored closely and should speak with their physician about any potential interactions.

It is a common misconception that people on warfarin should completely avoid certain foods, unless otherwise advised by a physician. While on warfarin therapy, you can still follow a healthy, well-balanced diet that is sensible and consistent.

REFERENCES

Medscape. (2008, October). Warfarin Oral: Patient Handout. Retrieved from Medscape Drug Reference website: <http://www.medscape.com/druginfo/patienthandout?cid=med&drugid=3949&drugname=Warfarin+Oral&monotype=patienthandout>