

Warfarin Care Clinic Information for Patients



REF NO:

WELCOME TO THE WARFARIN CARE CLINIC

Your doctor has registered you in the QML Pathology Warfarin Care Clinic so that we can monitor your blood and keep your warfarin dosage at a safe level.

Currently QML Pathology cares for over 10,000 patients throughout Queensland and northern New South Wales.

The Warfarin Care Clinic is not funded by Medicare or any other funding source. We will require your full cooperation to make this service run efficiently and effectively.

CONTACT DETAILS*

Ph **1300 661 963** or warfarincare@qml.com.au

Mon-Fri: 10:00am to 3:00pm

Sat: 10:00am to 1:00pm

* Always provide your reference number with any communications. Have a pen and paper (or your notebook) ready to record your results and/or dosage changes, or other information. If you are due to have a blood test, then write any new information on your request form. Make sure one of the questions on your request form is marked with "Yes" so the changes will be forwarded to the QML Pathology Warfarin Care Clinic.
Do not send SMS.

WARFARIN CARE CLINIC FEES

Registration Fee

The Warfarin Care Clinic registration fee is a one off fee billed at the time of your first INR test as a Warfarin Care Clinic member.

Annual Fee

The Warfarin Care Clinic annual fee will be charged on the 1st of November of each year via invoice from our accounts department.

Concessions and Exemptions

Concession rates will apply to all patients over the age of 65 and under the age of 18.

DVA and Health Care Card holders will also be eligible for concession rates.

QML Pathology will bill the DVA directly for eligible DVA card holders.

Nursing home residents are exempt from Warfarin Care Clinic fees.

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Warfarin – What You Need To Know?

Warfarin is a medicine used to treat or prevent blood clots (thrombosis). It is taken in tablet form, once per day. There are two brands of warfarin: Coumadin® and Marevan®.

Dindevan® is another brand of medicine only used in those who are **allergic to warfarin**. It is taken twice daily, unlike warfarin which is taken once a day. The information in this leaflet applies to all three medicines.

It is important that you **always take the same brand of warfarin**. Make sure you always have enough medicine, so that you don't run out.

- ✗ **Do not** swap from one brand to the other.
- ✗ **Do not** combine these brands. (This may affect the blood test result).

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Warfarin is a type of blood thinning medicine known as an anticoagulant (anti-clotting). These types of medicines lengthen the time it takes for your body to form a blood clot. This means it thins the blood out to lower the risk of blood clots forming that can cause a stroke or a blockage in your lungs or veins.

The aim of treatment is only to slow down the clotting process; if the blood was prevented from clotting altogether this would cause bleeding. Bleeding can be a potential risk when taking this medicine.

Warfarin works by stopping the blood clotting factors from functioning. It does this by blocking the action of vitamin K. The body uses vitamin K as a final step in creating blood clotting factors (which are made in the liver). You get vitamin K from your diet. The net effect of warfarin in your body is a balance between the amount of vitamin K and warfarin in your system. (Refer to "INR Blood Tests" for further information about the impact of vitamin K.)

Once you begin taking warfarin it will take several days to take effect. Similarly it takes some days to wear off once you stop it. This is because the warfarin-affected blood clotting factors need to work their way in and out of your body.

COUMADIN® TABLETS

Coumadin® tablets are available in three strengths. Each strength has a different colour to distinguish it from the others. Be sure you are taking the correct tablet by checking the colour and strength.



1 mg
Light Tan

Scored with the number 1 and Coumadin on one side, plain on the other



2 mg
Lavender

Scored with the number 2 and Coumadin on one side, plain on the other



5 mg
Green

Scored with the number 5 and Coumadin on one side, plain on the other

MAREVAN® TABLETS

Marevan® tablets are available in three strengths. Each strength has a different colour to distinguish it from the others. Be sure you are taking the correct tablet by checking the colour and strength.



1 mg
Brown

Scored bevelled edge, with M1 marked on one side, plain on the other



3 mg
Blue

Scored bevelled edge, with M3 marked on one side, plain on the other



5 mg
Pink

Scored bevelled edge, with M5 marked on one side, plain on the other

REASONS FOR WARFARIN TREATMENT

Warfarin can be used for:

- Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT)
- Pulmonary Embolism (PE)
- Heart conditions: Atrial Fibrillation (AF), valve replacements (these can be metallic/mechanical or tissue)
- Stroke (CVA)
- Other blood clotting conditions.

DURATION OF WARFARIN TREATMENT

Your personal health conditions will guide the doctor's decision regarding how long you will need to stay on warfarin treatment.

- **Up to 6 months:** Simple DVT/PE, valve replacement (tissue), AF (if temporary)
- **Up to 24 months:** Major DVT/PE
- **Life-long:** AF, Mechanical heart valve, recurrent or life-threatening clots

If your treatment is NOT life-long, you will be asked to see your doctor when your warfarin duration is due for review.

STOPPING WARFARIN

If any doctor ceases your warfarin permanently, please **contact the Warfarin Care Clinic** so we can close your file.

We will require the **date you have ceased** and the **name of the doctor** who has asked you to cease your warfarin.

WHEN STORING WARFARIN

- ✓ Keep tablets dry.
- ✓ Keep in a cool dry place where the temperature stays below 30°C.
- ✗ Do not leave the tablets in the car or on a window sill on a hot day.
- ✓ **Keep out of reach of children.**

SIDE EFFECTS

It is important to speak with your doctor to ensure you fully understand the impact of taking warfarin. Side effects from warfarin are quite uncommon. The most serious side effect of warfarin is bleeding.

This bleeding might be obvious. For example:

- A nose bleed
- Bleeding from cuts or from gums
- Bruising
- Red or dark brown urine
- Red streaked or black bowel motions or
- Heavy periods.

However, bleeding in deeper tissue can be harder to identify and may present as pain, swelling, severe or persistent headaches, dizziness or weakness. **You should contact your doctor if any of these signs or symptoms occur.**

Other less common side effects are hair loss, skin rashes, headache, nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea.

- ✓ If you develop any symptoms or side effects, **speak with your doctor.**
- ✓ **Notify the Warfarin Care Clinic** about any symptoms and all treatments being taken. Our dosing doctors need this information to ensure your management is safe and appropriate.

HOW WILL I KNOW I HAVE THE RIGHT DOSE OF WARFARIN?

You will require blood tests (known as INR) to check how well warfarin is working. At first the blood tests will be done every second or third day. When the blood level is stable, the frequency of testing will reduce to weekly, fortnightly and then longer intervals. **You will require regular blood testing as long as you remain on warfarin.**

WHAT IF I MISS A DOSE?

If you remember within six hours, then take the dose. If you are unsure or remember after this time, then take your normal dose the next day. **Do not take a double dose** in order to make up the missed dose.

If you miss one dose **more than a week before** your blood test, it will not reflect in your blood test, and you need not mention it. BUT if you have missed more than one dose, you should mention this.

If you miss one or more doses **within a week of your blood test** (INR), please ensure you note this on the form so we can adjust your dose accordingly.

- ✗ **Do not** take a double dose of warfarin in order to make up a missed dose.
- ✓ **Make a note on the form** if you miss one or more doses within a week of your scheduled blood test (INR).

DOSE REMINDERS

Here are some helpful hints that might assist you in remembering to take your warfarin:

- Put a reminder note in a prominent place, e.g., fridge, bathroom mirror etc.
- Use a dosette box placed where you will see it. Refill this with the latest dose after each phone call, and this will help you remember the dose
- Keep a supply of tablets at work so you can take them at work if you forget before you leave (if you do this, rotate the bottles with those at home so expiry is not an issue)
- Use an alarm set for your usual time
- Set a reminder on your work calendar – this is good for your next test date too. Include a reminder to get your Rule 3 Exemption form signed by your doctor every 6 months.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

- **Warfarin only reduces your risk** of another event or clot - **it never eliminates this risk** (even when the INR is within your range).
- Warfarin is a dangerous medicine, if taken **incorrectly**.
- You can be at risk of haemorrhage if you have a weak bleeding point in your body, even when the INR is within the desired range.



Tablet cutter

USEFUL AIDS

Tablet cutters

Tablet cutters are available through your pharmacy to assist in cutting your tablets to provide the correct dosage

This groove is present to allow the tablet to be cut. The tablet cutter is placed here to cut the tablet in half.

- ✗ **Do not** cut tablets more than once.

Webster packs

If you are unable to deal with a large number of tablets, or if you have difficulty cutting tablets, speak with your pharmacy about a Webster Pack. These packs set out your tablets in the exact doses that you need for seven days. Usually they are packed by the pharmacist on a fixed day of the week.

Due to the fact that your warfarin doses may change after an INR test, your Webster Pack should be packed from one INR test date to the next. Therefore if you are already receiving a Webster Pack for your medicines, you should request your warfarin in a separate pack.

Please note: This may incur a small fee from the pharmacy. Please provide QML Pathology Warfarin Care Clinic with the name and phone number of your pharmacy and we will contact them directly with your doses. If your pharmacy is unable to provide this service, QML Pathology Warfarin Care Clinic can advise of a pharmacy who can.

Identification bracelet

It is recommended that patients taking warfarin wear an identification bracelet. This is important should you be involved in a medical emergency.

INR Blood Test

WHAT DOES INR MEASURE?

You will require blood tests to check how well warfarin is working. At first the blood tests will be done every second or third day. When the blood level is stable, the frequency of testing will reduce to weekly, fortnightly and then longer intervals.

You will require regular blood testing as long as you remain on warfarin.

The blood test result is given as an International Normalised Ratio (INR). This is a measure of the time it takes for your blood to clot. It is like a warfarin level, and is used to adjust the warfarin dose.

- The higher the INR, the thinner the blood, and the less warfarin you need.
- The lower the INR, the more likely it is that you will develop a clot, so you may need more warfarin.
- The goal is to find the right dose of warfarin for you so that your INR result is kept within a **target range**. Your individual target range is determined by your reason for taking warfarin and other health factors.

INR targets are a range rather than a single figure because INRs tend to fluctuate and a range allows us (and you) more flexibility. This flexibility will give you a longer break between blood tests.

Some typical INR ranges:

- INR 2-3 Deep Vein Thrombosis(DVT)/ Pulmonary Embolism(PE)/Atrial Fibrillation(AF)
- INR 2.5-3.5 Mechanical valves/recurrent DVT's/ major PE's

An INR > 4.5 means your blood is too thin

An INR < 1.5 means your blood is too thick

TESTING TIMES

Initially your blood test will be performed every 2-3 days until the INR comes into range. Once in range, tests will be done weekly, and then if the INR stays in range, the time between tests will be gradually increased to a maximum of 8-12 weeks.

We recommend attending a QML Pathology collection centre between 8am and 9am on the day of your test so that we can receive and check your INR test results as soon as possible.

Reminders when you miss your test

We do understand that you can forget to test from time to time. However, we would ask that you do test on the correct date where possible. If you do forget to test we may follow up with you by sending you a reminder SMS (if you receive your results via SMS), or phone you, or you may receive a friendly reminder letter in the mail. A copy will also be sent to your referring doctor. Please go for your test immediately upon receipt of the reminder letter or notify us of any problem if you are unable to test. If you do fail to test, a second letter will be sent advising you that your warfarin monitoring may be ceased and returned to the care of your doctor if no response is received by us. Your referring doctor will also be contacted following this letter. Again, please remember to contact us if there is any problem that prevents you from having your INR test.

WHAT AFFECTS THE INR?

A number of metabolic and lifestyle factors can affect your response to warfarin. If your INR control is unstable, please consider the following points:

- Check whether you are taking the correct brand of warfarin
- Check the expiry date
- Check whether you have missed any tablets
- Check you are taking the correct dose. If in doubt, check your calculations with our staff
- Are you taking any other medicines? Some common culprits are antibiotics, herbal or vitamin supplements, diet aids, pain relievers or rubs
- Has your general health changed, e.g., diarrhoea, loss of appetite, heart failure etc?
- Have you had any gastrointestinal upsets?
- Have you changed your normal level of alcohol consumption?
- Have you developed a fever?
- Have you had a notable weight change?
- Has your diet changed significantly since the last test?

GUIDELINES FOR INR CONTROL

Your INR is a balance between the amount of vitamin K and warfarin in your body. It is also affected by the metabolism of warfarin. Warfarin metabolism is influenced by many prescription medicines and over-the-counter products.

Some medicines can increase the effect of warfarin while others may decrease it. **QML Pathology must be advised of any medicine changes** that will last more than three days. You must do this to ensure that the next test date is reviewed in line with the medicine changes.

Medicines

Pain relief

For simple pain relief, use paracetamol, i.e., Panadol/Panamax. If taking four or more paracetamol tablets daily for three days or longer, please advise QML Pathology.

Some patients are on regular aspirin as directed by their doctors but DO NOT take extra aspirin for pain relief. Aspirin is also a blood thinner but it works in a different way to the warfarin. Be aware that some cough mixtures or flu medicines contain aspirin.

Almost all pain relievers can increase the INR including:

- Anti-inflammatory medicines
- Liniment rubs
- Endone, Tramal and other narcotic pain relievers.

The only pain relief that will not affect the INR is heat. A wheat bag can be useful, but be careful not to burn yourself.

Please note - this does not mean you cannot take these medicines if needed, but do notify us. With additional tests we can often stabilise your INR again once you are on a regular doses of painkillers.

General Medicines

Some over-the-counter medicines can increase the INR:

- Thrush tablets and oral gels (Daktarin, Diflucan) will markedly increase the INR
- Cough mixtures, mouth ulcer gels, Vicks Vapour Rub, tinea treatments and others.

Antibiotics

Nearly all antibiotics affect the INR (either increase or decrease), some dramatically. If you start ANY antibiotic you need to have an INR done around 2-3 days after starting.

Vitamin, mineral and herbal supplements

- Check vitamin K content of supplements (do not confuse vitamin K with potassium which has the chemical symbol of 'K'). The chemical name of vitamin K is phytomenadione.
- Minerals such as iron, zinc and magnesium should be taken two hours apart from warfarin as they can affect its uptake.
- Vitamins C and E in large doses can affect the absorption of vitamin K, which in turn alters the INR levels.
- Herbal supplements (mostly those containing plant extracts) can contain unknown quantities of vitamin K, which can make your INR unstable.
- Be cautious with herbal teas; some contain coumarin derivatives, e.g., tonka beans, melilot (sweet clover), sweet woodruff and camomile. Green teas contain vitamin K.

- **Consult** your doctor **and** the Warfarin Care Clinic **before** commencing any supplement.
- Some herbal supplements may combine with warfarin to stop blood clotting by ways other than increasing the INR (e.g., by stopping platelets from working).

Contact the Warfarin Care Clinic if:

- you have any changes to medicines that will last more than three days. (This includes pain relief medicines and rubs, antibiotics, and anti-inflammatory medicines).
- Your doctor changes a dose of any of your current medicines or if you stop any medicines. (An extra blood test may be necessary).

Common herbal medicines that may interact with warfarin

Note that these substances may not be a problem for everyone taking them. But if your INR is unstable, these may be possible causes. You should have your INR checked soon after you commence any of the following:

- Cranberry
- Co Enzyme Q10
- Dan Shen
- Devil's Claw
- Dong Quai
- Fenugreek
- Fish Oils (Omega 3)
- Garlic
- Ginger
- Gingko Biloba
- Ginseng
- Glucosamine
- Horse Chestnut
- Red Clover
- Saw Palmetto
- St John's Wart
- Sweet Clover

Dietary guidelines

Consistency in diet is important. Avoidance of vitamin K is not recommended, but eating the same amount of foods containing vitamin K will allow us to find the dose of warfarin that matches your dietary intake.

Foods that are high in vitamin K are green leafy vegetables, i.e., spinach, alfalfa sprouts, broccoli, lettuce, cabbage, coriander, parsley, soya beans, and canola and olive oils.

- You can eat these foods in moderation; **you do not have to cease** eating them completely.
- Please note: broccoli, lettuce and cabbage have less vitamin K than spinach or sprouts.

Sometimes, if your INR is high, we will ask you to eat some of these foods high in vitamin K, so it is advisable to keep some (frozen vegetables are handy) in the house in case of this.

Dietary drinks, e.g., Tony Ferguson or Optifast, are vitamin K supplemented. **Advise us immediately if you start on these**, and **always** tell us when you stop as they have a substantial effect on the INR. Ensure and Sustagen are also vitamin K supplemented and we should be notified when using these.

- Consistency in diet is important.
- Avoid crash diets.
- Avoidance of foods with vitamin K is not recommended.
- **Contact** the Warfarin Care Clinic when you start and stop dietary drinks such as Tony Ferguson, Optifast, Ensure and Sustagen.

Alcohol consumption guidelines

Alcohol increases the effect of warfarin. If you drink a small amount of alcohol on a regular basis, it is usually possible to adjust your warfarin dose to allow for this. Drinking large amounts of alcohol will **significantly increase your risk of bleeding**.

- Alcohol **increases** INR.
- A **maximum** of two standard drinks is advised.

Exercise guidelines

Exercise is encouraged in moderation. Changes to your activity level should be gradual. If you experience any ill effects including pain, shortness of breath or dizziness you should consult your doctor.

Warfarin thins the blood, thus making it more likely that you will bruise or bleed if you are injured. Therefore you should avoid all contact sport and activities with risk of serious injuries such as hang gliding or rock climbing. Normal sexual activity will not usually cause problems.

Receiving Your INR Blood Test Results

Communication about your INR blood test results is a two-way street. You will need to ensure you have notified the QML Pathology Warfarin Care Clinic about anything that might affect your test result. When the INR blood test has been completed, the Warfarin Care Clinic will need to notify you of your result and any changes to your medicine.

When you have your blood test, a special request form needs to be sent in with your INR. This form has a number of questions that the QML Pathology Warfarin Care Clinic dosing doctor needs to know. It also allows you to communicate with us about any important changes.

Please complete ALL questions.

If you write ANYTHING on the form that you need staff in the QML Pathology Warfarin Care Clinic to know, you should mark at least one of the questions as yes. Please ask the collector if you require assistance completing the form.

The collector can give you a blank form to take home and use at the next test, *or* you can obtain a form from the QML Pathology website qml.com.au.

If you test after 12.00pm, it is unlikely that you will receive results that day. We recommend attending a collection centre between 9.00am – 12.00 noon. QML Pathology Warfarin Care Clinic may telephone you if there are important changes to your dose; otherwise you will receive your results by SMS or other means (as nominated).

- **Ensure** your contact details, phone numbers and postal address are up to date at all times.
- **Mobile phones** should be switched on and/or other phones should have a suitable answering service if you are unable to attend to these.
- **Attend** the collection centre between 9:00am -12:00pm to receive your results on the same day.

RECEIVING YOUR INR DOSE RESULT BY SMS

Undergoing warfarin therapy can greatly encroach on your life and freedom. To help alleviate this, QML Pathology Warfarin Care Clinic has implemented an SMS results system. It allows you to keep track of your dosage requirements, no matter where you are (as long as you are within your service provider's mobile network area).

If you register for the SMS service, you will be able to receive your results and reminder messages via SMS text message to your mobile. You can nominate another person (carer or family member) to receive the SMS however this person must be comfortable in sending SMS text messages on their mobile phone to use this service.

If there are any major changes, or if we have any questions for you we will phone and talk to you instead of the SMS. If we do talk to you, we can also send the SMS if you wish to keep a record. Simply ask the caller to do this.

HOW DOES THE SMS SERVICE WORK?

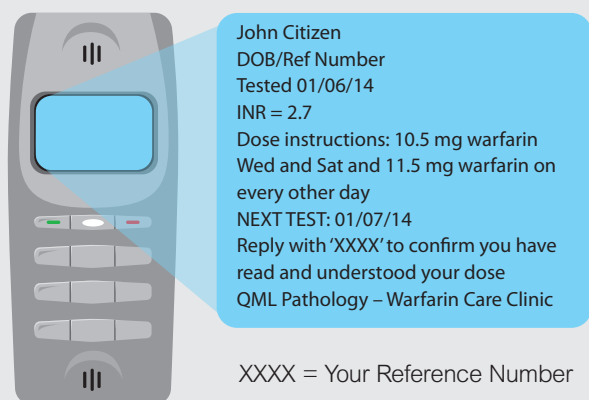
After you have your blood collection and INR tested, a warfarin dosage will be prescribed. The instructions will be sent via text to your nominated mobile number.

The text message will show:

- Your name
- Reference number
- Date of test
- INR result
- Warfarin dose
- Next test date

Please note: Depending on your mobile screen size, this message may extend across several screens. You may need to scroll down to read the full message.

SMS message example (Images of SMS messages used here are examples only and do not pertain to your warfarin therapy).



This is an example only; This is NOT your dose.

When you receive your dosage via SMS there will be a reminder at the end of the message asking you to 'Reply with your reference number, OR yes' if you understand the instructions'. **It is essential that you reply to this message.** Your reply will inform QML Pathology Warfarin Care Clinic that you have acknowledged receipt and acceptance of the dosage instructions. (Refer to your particular phone manufacturer's instructions for directions on how to reply to text messages.)

If you do not understand the SMS instructions, or have any changes or questions, you must contact the QML Pathology Warfarin Care Clinic.

If you do not reply, we will assume you did not receive the SMS and resend the SMS within 24 hours of your collection time. If you still haven't responded within 48 hours of your collection date and time, a staff member from QML Pathology Warfarin Care Clinic will call you to discuss the results and SMS with you.

Please do not SMS back any questions, as these cannot be answered by SMS.

We ask that you continue to take the same dose until we contact you. All phoning out to patients is done in order of clinical priority. We contact new patients and those with abnormal results first, then those with minor dose changes. If, however, you

do not receive your results within 2 - 3 days of your test, you should call us on

1300 661 963 to confirm your INR and Warfarin doses.

You can receive results (i.e., INR, warfarin dose, and next test date) by:

- SMS to your mobile (this is the preferred and most efficient option)
- Fax to your pharmacy if they pack your medicines (we cannot send faxes to a private residence)
- Mail to your postal address (only stable results are sent by mail as there may be a delay in delivery time dependent on your area)
- Phone call

We will always contact you by phone if your results are abnormal.

If QML Pathology Warfarin Care Clinic repeatedly do not receive a valid reply or we are unable to send an SMS notification to your nominated mobile phone number, we may review your continued enrolment in our Warfarin Care Clinic. We will notify your referring doctor if we consider this necessary.

- **Results** will be sent via text message to your mobile phone.
 - You can nominate another person (carer or family member) to receive the SMS
 - The patient or nominated person must be comfortable using text messaging to use this service.
 - Do not SMS back any questions – these will **not** be answered.
- If there are any major changes (or if we have questions for you), we will phone and talk to you instead of using SMS.
- If your result is **abnormal** or poses **serious risk to your health** we will **not** send your dosage via SMS. A staff member from QML Pathology Warfarin Care Clinic will call you.
- Calls are prioritised in order of clinical significance.

Complete and return the "Warfarin Dosage by SMS" form to register.

Staying Safe While On Warfarin

WHAT TO DO WHEN BLEEDING OCCURS

For women: A heavier than normal menstrual cycle lasting longer or showing large blood clots should be discussed with your doctor.

Fresh or old blood in urine or in the bowel motion: See your doctor first and then advise QML Pathology Warfarin Care Clinic.

Minor bleeding from a cut: Most often can be treated at home by applying firm pressure on the cut for a longer length of time than normal using a clean tissue or a wound dressing.

For lacerations/cuts requiring stitches: Wrap the area with a firm bandage/ cloth, i.e., clean tea towel or bath towel, maintain pressure on the area, elevate if possible and **go to your doctor or nearest hospital.**

Large Nosebleed: See your doctor or go to the nearest hospital. Notify QML Pathology Warfarin Care Clinic of the outcome.

Minor nosebleeds: These are quite common in patients on warfarin, especially in winter. These can be treated with pressure to the area, (high up on the nose) whilst resting with the head forward. A cold pack to the back of the neck can help. Moistening the nasal tissues can help prevent recurrence; try using a spray like Nozoil. Once settled take care not to dislodge the clot by blowing your nose!

Bleeding of the gums: Check with your dentist as it may be gingivitis (inflammation of the gums). If bleeding persists, please see your doctor. It is recommended that you use a soft rather than hard toothbrush.

Major bleeding is usually due to one of the following:

- INR too high
- Taking other medicines which affect clotting, e.g., aspirin
- Mucous ulceration or infection at the bleeding site.

It is important to seek medical attention for any major bleeding.

Important note: QML Pathology Warfarin Care Clinic cannot advise on health matters unrelated to warfarin. Please discuss these directly with your doctor.

Other important factors

- The use of an electric shaver is recommended for men.
- If you have a serious fall, or any significant bump to your head you should see the doctor and remind them you are on warfarin.

Pain: Any unusual pain that is severe or prolonged and cannot be relieved by taking pain medicine should be reported to your doctor.

Swelling: Any unusual swelling should be reported to your doctor.

Pregnancy: Please notify your doctor **immediately** if you think you could be pregnant. Abnormalities to the baby can occur if warfarin is taken in the early stages of pregnancy. Alternative anticoagulation medicine is required at this time. Warfarin can be taken after the baby is born and during breastfeeding.

WHAT TO DO WHEN TRAVELLING

You must notify QML Pathology Warfarin Care Clinic if you are going away on holidays or business. Sometimes we can change your next test date to fit in with your plans but other times you will need a test whilst you are away.

If you are travelling:

- **In Queensland and Tweed (Northern NSW):** Speak to QML Pathology Warfarin Care Clinic for the address of a nearby collection centre and give us a holiday contact number. A listing of QML Pathology collection centres can be found on our website qml.com.au.
- **Interstate:** Ask your doctor for a cumulative report and letter outlining your medical condition. Your QML Pathology request form is not valid outside the QML Pathology network. You will need to find a doctor at your holiday location to do your test and give you a dose. Your doctor may give you a dose over the phone using the INR from your holiday location, if you have pre-arranged this. On arriving home contact QML Pathology Warfarin Care Clinic and advise us of your current dose and suggested test date.

- **Overseas:** Obtain a cumulative report and letter from your doctor outlining your medical condition and take ample supplies of your medicine along with you. The medicine will need to be taken in its original packaging from the pharmacy with its prescription labelling intact, i.e., do not put it in a dosette box. This is for customs purposes. Your QML Pathology request form is not valid outside the QML Pathology network. You will need to find a doctor at your holiday location and work within that doctor's system. On arriving home contact QML Pathology Warfarin Care Clinic and advise us of your current dose and suggested test date. You should have travel insurance, but be aware that many policies will not cover pre-existing conditions.

INR is calculated in a way that allows results from different laboratories to be compared. This means that if you are tested by another laboratory while on holiday, it will mean the same as if it were done by QML Pathology.

Note: QML Pathology Warfarin Care Clinic does not provide a dosing service when you test outside the QML Pathology network.



WHAT TO DO WHEN UNDERGOING MEDICAL PROCEDURES, SURGERY OR DENTAL WORK

- Tell the person doing the procedure that you are on warfarin. The doctor/dentist doing the procedure **must** tell you and QML Pathology Warfarin Care Clinic how they want the INR managed prior to the procedure.
- QML Pathology Warfarin Care Clinic will not alter your dose **until** we know what is required. If your doctor/dentist needs a lower INR for the procedure this may take time to achieve so **adequate notice** will be needed.
- Be aware you may need to miss doses in this situation.
- People with mechanical heart valves **should not stop** warfarin for more than a couple of days unless covered by full dose heparin injection (e.g. Clexane®) or as advised by their cardiologist/cardiac surgeon. Any patient with mechanical valves should discuss any cessation of warfarin with both their cardiologist and QML Pathology Warfarin Care Clinic.
- Contact QML Pathology Warfarin Care Clinic and give details of the procedure and the doctor's name.
- The doctor doing the procedure should tell you the dose of warfarin to recommence on and advise when to have your next blood test. Please inform QML Pathology Warfarin Care Clinic of these details.

If you are admitted to or discharged from hospital

- QML Pathology Warfarin Care Clinic cannot give you your doses when you are in hospital. Your doctor will do this for you whilst you are an inpatient.
 - If a pre-booked procedure, notify QML Pathology Warfarin Care Clinic two weeks before the procedure is due so any dose changes can be made.
 - If an emergency admission, please notify QML Pathology Warfarin Care Clinic of your admission, so we are not worried if you are not at home for our collectors or not answering your phone.
 - Please remind the hospital staff to notify QML Pathology Warfarin Care Clinic when you leave hospital, as we cannot recommence your dosing until we get discharge information from the hospital.
- If you are prescribed heparin injection (e.g. clexane) when being discharged from hospital, you will need to remain under the care of the hospital or your doctor (unless under a private specialist) until you have stopped taking heparin and your INR results are in range.

Cardioversion procedure

If you are to have this procedure please notify QML Pathology Warfarin Care Clinic as soon as you have the date the procedure is to occur. Your blood test results prior to this procedure will need to be in range for at least a month before the doctor will do the procedure. Therefore, you will need to have weekly blood tests for a while, and sometimes the INR range will change for this period.

- QML Pathology Warfarin Care Clinic is not responsible for your warfarin monitoring when you are in hospital or if you are taking heparin (e.g. clexane) injection.
- **You will need to be reinstated in the Warfarin Care Clinic after being discharged (short stays may be exempt).**
- Prior to discharge, ask the hospital staff to notify QML Pathology Warfarin Care Clinic, as we cannot recommence your dosing until we get discharge information from the hospital.
- If your hospital admission is an emergency, please notify QML Pathology Warfarin Care Clinic as soon as possible. If it is a pre-booked procedure please give two weeks' notice.

ESSENTIAL WARFARIN INFORMATION

- ✓ Make sure we can contact you at all times. If you have a mobile keep it switched on, or use a suitable answering service for urgent messages.
- ✓ Contact QML Pathology Warfarin Care Clinic within 2-3 days if you have **not** received your dosage instructions.
- ✓ Continue on the same warfarin dosage until advised otherwise.
- ✓ Take your warfarin at the same time each day
- ✓ Remain on the same brand of warfarin.
- ✓ Contact QML Pathology Warfarin Care Clinic when any medicine changes are for 3 days or longer. (Prescribed or over the counter medicines, including antibiotics, pain relief, vitamins or herbal medicines, gels or creams).
- ✓ Contact QML Pathology Warfarin Care Clinic if you are admitted to, or discharged from hospital.
- ✓ Ask the discharging hospital for warfarin dose instructions before leaving.
- ✓ Ask the discharging hospital to contact QML Pathology Warfarin Care Clinic to supply information of your admission. We may not be able to immediately advise you of ongoing warfarin doses if we do not receive this information.
- ✓ Tell us if you are taking heparin (e.g. Clexane®) injection. You must remain under the care of your hospital or doctor (unless under a private specialist) until you have stopped taking heparin and your INR results have returned to range.
- ✓ Contact QML Pathology Warfarin Care Clinic if you are to have any procedures, surgery, dental or otherwise, and advise us of your pre-operative requirements.
- ✓ Ask the doctor who is doing the procedure for post-operative instructions on when you should recommence your warfarin and whether other anti-coagulant cover is required. Contact QML Pathology Warfarin Care Clinic and supply this information so your next test can be planned.
- ✓ Test on or as close to the date recommended by the Haematologist
- ✓ Read the information in your patient pack.
- ✗ Don't use aspirin or aspirin based products unless ordered by QML Pathology Warfarin Care Clinic or your doctor.
- ✗ Don't use aspirin for pain relief. Aspirin is another form of blood thinner.
- ✗ Don't send QML Pathology Warfarin Care Clinic messages via SMS. This service is used only to supply you with your INR, warfarin dose and next test information. We will not respond to SMS.

QML Pathology Warfarin Care Clinic:

Ph **1300 661 963** or warfarincare@qml.com.au

Mon-Fri: 10:00am to 3:00pm

Sat: 10:00am to 1:00pm

* Always provide your reference number with any communications. Have a pen and paper (or your notebook) ready to record your results and/or dosage changes, or other information. If you are due to have a blood test, then write any new information on your request form. Make sure one of the questions on your request form is marked with "Yes" so the changes will be forwarded to QML Pathology Warfarin Care Clinic.
Do not send SMS.

What to do if you are told to stop taking your warfarin permanently

- Please notify the QML Pathology Warfarin Care Clinic as soon as you are advised to cease your warfarin.
- We need to know the name of the doctor who has advised you to cease warfarin so we can report this information to your doctors and close your file.