

Information for patients, family and carers

Warfarin – Disruption to supply

What is warfarin?

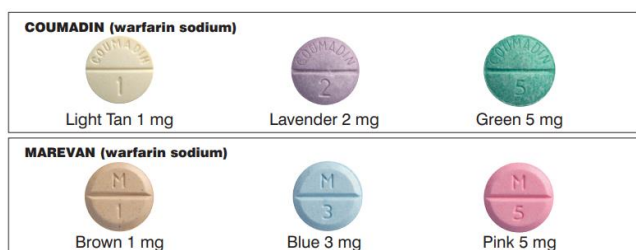
Warfarin is a type of 'anti-clotting' medicine known as an 'anticoagulant.' It is used to prevent or treat unwanted blood clots within blood vessels that can cause stroke, heart attack, or other serious conditions such as blood clots in the legs or lungs. It works by increasing the time it takes for your blood to clot. There are a few things about warfarin that make it different from most medicines: the need for regular blood tests to monitor the effects ('INR' test); the need for frequent dose changes; and the increased chance of bleeding.

What different tablet strengths and brands does warfarin come in?

There are two brands of warfarin available, called Coumadin® and Marevan®. Coumadin and Marevan are not the same, and you should not change the brand that you are taking, unless your doctor specifically tells you to do so.

You may be required to use more than one strength of tablet when making up your required dose. The tablets of each brand come in different tablet strengths and colours. There are several ways to make up the correct dose using these different strength tablets.

Figure 1: Different brands and strengths of warfarin available.



Why is it important to continue taking warfarin?

You will not look or feel any different while taking warfarin and the only way to tell whether warfarin is working safely and effectively is by doing regular blood tests, under the guidance of your doctor. Stopping warfarin may cause serious harm due to stroke, heart attack, or serious blood clots in the legs or lungs. **Do not stop taking your warfarin** unless your doctor has specifically told you to.

What should I do if I run out of warfarin?

It is important that you **do not stop taking your warfarin**. If you are running out of tablets, fill your prescription as soon as possible at your local pharmacy to make sure you do not miss a dose.

Due to the current disruption to supply of warfarin, you may need to fill your prescription elsewhere if your regular pharmacy does not have any. Contact your doctor immediately if you have run out of tablets and are having issues getting more.

It is important that you stay on the same brand of warfarin unless advised by your health care provider. If the regular strength(s) of warfarin that you use are unavailable, your pharmacist or doctor may be able to provide you with a different strength of warfarin to make up your regular dose. This may mean taking more tablets of a lower strength to make up your regular dose.

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For example, if your dose of warfarin is 5 mg per day, you could make up this dose by using either:

- 1 x 5 mg tablet **OR**
- 5 x 1 mg tablets **OR**
- 2 x 2 mg tablets and 1 x 1 mg tablet.

If you do miss a dose:

- take the dose **as soon as possible** if you remember on the same day
- **never** take a double dose of warfarin the next day to make up for missed doses.

What should I do if I am given a different strength of warfarin?

If you need to use a different strength of warfarin to make your regular dose, ask your pharmacist or doctor to explain the changes to you. Your pharmacist may be able to help by providing a dosing chart, pill box or blister pack.

If you're unsure of your dose, ask your pharmacist or doctor to explain.

You may find it helpful to write down the dose of warfarin that you take each day in a calendar or at the back of your warfarin information booklet.

It is important that you continue to get regular INR blood tests to monitor your warfarin treatment and speak to your doctor about your dose of warfarin regularly.

What has caused the disruption to the supply of warfarin in Australia?

The disruption to the supply of the different strengths of warfarin has been caused by

manufacturing issues. Although pharmaceutical companies do their best to maintain supply, situations can arise where a disruption to the supply cannot be avoided.

While the disruption to the supply is expected to resolve in the coming months, you may not be able to access all strengths of your brand of warfarin during this time.

Where can I find out more information?

For more information on warfarin and INR blood tests, please contact your doctor, pharmacist or healthcare provider.

Other useful sources of information are:

- NPS - Living with Warfarin
<https://www.nps.org.au/consumers/warfarin#what-is-warfarin>
- Coumadin and Marevan – Consumer Medicines Information
<https://www.ebs.tga.gov.au/ebs/picmi/picmirepository.nsf/PICMI?OpenForm&t=&q=warfarin>
- Therapeutic Goods Administration – Shortages
<https://www.tga.gov.au/safety/shortages>
- Poisons Information line, for information on overdoses or poisoning: 13 11 26
- HealthDirect, for health advice from experienced nurses: 1800 022 222