

## People able to answer your questions

While in hospital, your ward doctor and clinical pharmacist can give you explanations and information. Ask the nurse if you're not sure how to contact these people.

Once you go home, your GP and Practice Nurse are the key support people.

Your community Pharmacist is also able to advise you.

# Warfarin

## Things you need to know

## ✘ Why have I been started on Warfarin?

- Warfarin is an anticoagulant – it slows clotting
- It is used if there is the possibility of harmful blood clots forming that could prevent the blood flowing smoothly to your brain, lungs and heart.
- Warfarin is given to people who have health problems e.g. some heart problems such as atrial fibrillation to prevent stroke or if a blood clot has formed in the leg or in the lung, to prevent any further blood clots.

## ✘ Using warfarin safely

In order to use the medicine safely, you **MUST**

- ☑ follow your doctor's instructions about the specific dose that you need.
- ☑ take warfarin once a day at the same time each day. This is usually in the evening so that you can go for your blood tests early in the morning.
- ☑ you must not stop taking this medicine unless directed by your doctor.
- ☑ your response to this medicine may be affected by other medicines, complementary medicines, by your diet, lifestyle, body weight and state of health. Tell your doctor about any changes so they know what might be causing a change in your blood levels.
- ☑ In the first few days of starting the medicine you will need *daily* blood tests. Once home, you may have a test *2 or 3 times a week*. A few hours after having the blood test, phone your GP / Practice Nurse to ask what the blood result is and what dose to take over the next few days. Write what is said in your red book.

## ✘ How to take your medicine

- ✓ Follow the instructions given by your GP about what dose to take. Write down the test result and dose of tablets as instructed in the red book that the staff will give you on discharge. A therapeutic range is between 2 and 3.
- ✓ Read the label on the medicine bottle carefully so you know how many milligrams (mgs) to take and any alerts you should be aware of.
- ✓ Swallow tablets with a glass of water.
- ✓ Take your medicine at the same time each day unless directed otherwise.
- ✓ Always keep a supply of this medicine because it could be dangerous to stop using it suddenly. You will be given special instructions if you are stopping the medicine.
- ✓ Keep your tablets out of the reach of children.

## ✘ Things to watch for – **call your GP immediately**

- ☹ Abnormal bleeding, for example, nose bleeds or blood in your urine or stools
- ☹ Severe nausea, diarrhoea, stomach cramps
- ☹ Black bowel motions
- ☹ Chest pain or tightness
- ☹ Skin rash (red itchy skin)

## ✘ Information on Discharge

When you're ready to go home, the ward doctor will phone your GP to tell them you are on warfarin. We will also send a discharge summary to your GP so they know the details of your care.

Make sure you get the following before you go home.

- ☑ a copy of the discharge summary explaining what happened while you were in hospital
- ☑ we will give you a red patient handbook titled "Your anticoagulant treatment". The ward pharmacist should give this to you. They will tell you more about warfarin.
- ☑ we will give you a prescription for **1mg** warfarin tablets (Marevan®).  
The 1mg tablets makes it easier for you to work out how many tablets to take each day. For example: if the GP says "take 2 mgs" then take 2 of the 1 mg tablets".
- ☑ the ward doctor will tell you how many tablets to take on the first night of discharge. You will then need to have a blood test in the community laboratory the next morning and call your GP after lunch for the result and next dose to take.
- ☑ A laboratory form for you to take to a community laboratory to have a blood test.

**If you have any questions, please ask your ward Doctor and/or Pharmacist.**