

Healthy Eating Guidelines for People Taking Warfarin Anticoagulants (Coumadin®)

Certain foods and beverages can affect how your warfarin works. This handout will help you to plan your diet when taking warfarin.

When we cut or scrape our skin, our blood forms a clot (or plug) so that we don't bleed too much. Vitamin K helps our blood to clot. Vitamin K is found in various foods that we eat. Green leafy vegetables are rich in vitamin K.

Some diseases and conditions can cause the blood to clot too much. When this happens, blood clots can form inside the body and block blood flow. This can cause heart attack, stroke, deep vein thrombosis and other serious health problems.

If your blood clots too much, your doctor may prescribe warfarin.

- | Warfarin is a pill that prevents blood clots.
- | Warfarin makes your blood clot slower.
- | Vitamin K has the opposite effect of warfarin and helps your blood to clot more quickly.
- | Your warfarin dose will be balanced with the amount of vitamin K in your usual diet to make your blood clot at a safe rate.

If you are taking warfarin, it is still important to eat foods that contain vitamin K. You can even continue to eat foods that are rich in vitamin K like green leafy vegetables. Vitamin K is needed for good health.

Your warfarin dose will work best if you eat about the same amount of vitamin K every day. Do not suddenly eat a lot more or a lot less vitamin K rich foods than you usually do. This helps keep your INR (a blood test that measures how long it takes for your blood to clot) in a safe range.



Steps you can take

Follow a healthy and well-balanced diet based on Canada's Food Guide, www.healthcanada.gc.ca/foodguide. You do not need to stop eating green leafy vegetables that are rich in vitamin K.

To keep your warfarin working well:

- | Avoid large changes in the amount of vitamin K you eat:
 - | If you eat green leafy vegetables, do not eat a lot one day and none the next.
 - | If you do not normally eat green leafy vegetables, do not suddenly eat a large amount of them.
- | Talk to your doctor before making any changes to your diet, especially if you plan to eat more or less green leafy vegetables. Your doctor may need to change how much warfarin you take.
- | Talk to your doctor before eating natto (fermented soybean), grapefruit, seville or tangelo oranges, or their juices. These change the way warfarin works.
- | Talk to your doctor before eating cranberries or cranberry juice. Cranberry products may change the way warfarin works.

The chart below is a list of green leafy vegetables and their vitamin K content. You can eat any of these foods as long as the total amount (mcg) of vitamin K you eat is about the same each day.

- | If your INR (blood clotting test) is stable and in safe range, keep eating the foods you normally eat.
- | If your INR is unstable (sometimes too high and sometimes too low) use the chart below to add up how much vitamin K you are eating each day. If you eat more vitamin K on some days than you do on other days, you may need to change your pattern of eating so it is more consistent to help stabilize your INR.

Talk to your doctor before making any changes to your diet.

Green Leafy Vegetable	Amount	Vitamin K (mcg)
Kale, raw	1 cup chopped	578
Kale, cooked	½ cup	561
Spinach, cooked	½ cup	469
Dandelion greens, raw	1 cup chopped	452
Collards, cooked	½ cup	442
Beet greens, cooked	½ cup	368
Swiss chard, raw	1 cup	315
Dandelion greens, cooked	½ cup	306
Swiss chard, cooked	½ cup	303
Turnip greens, cooked	½ cup	280
Parsley, raw	¼ cup (16 sprigs)	260
Mustard greens, cooked	½ cup	222
Collards, raw	1 cup chopped	194
Broccoli raab/Rapini, cooked	½ cup	169
Beet greens, raw	1 cup	161
Lettuce, spring mix (mesclun), raw	1 cup	154
Spinach, raw	1 cup	153
Endive and Escarole, raw	1 cup chopped	122

Brussel sprouts, cooked	4 sprouts	118
Broccoli, cooked	½ cup	116
Radicchio, raw	1 cup shredded	108
Lettuce, green leaf, raw	1 cup shredded	103
Broccoli, raw	1 cup chopped (or 3 flowerets)	94
Cabbage, cooked	½ cup shredded	86
Lettuce, romaine, raw	1 cup shredded	61
Lettuce, butterhead (boston), raw	1 cup shredded	60
Cabbage, raw	1 cup shredded	56

Other Tips

Your doctor may need to check your INR (blood clotting test) more often, or change your dose of warfarin, if your diet changes. Talk to your doctor if:

- | You plan to eat more green leafy 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 plan to travel to a place where the foods are different.

Alcohol

- | For most people, moderate alcohol intake does not change the way warfarin works.
- | If you drink alcohol, limit it to:

- | 10 drinks a week for women, with no more than 2 drinks a day
- | 15 drinks a week for men, with no more than 3 drinks a day
- | One standard drink is a:
 - | 341 mL (12 oz) bottle of beer
 - | 142 mL (5 oz) glass of wine
 - | 43 mL (1.5 oz) serving of spirits.
- | Talk to your doctor if you are taking additional medications or have questions about alcohol use.

Vitamin and Mineral Supplements

- | If you take a vitamin or mineral supplement that contains vitamin K, take it consistently every day. Many multivitamin and some calcium supplements contain vitamin K.
- | Supplements that don't contain vitamin K can still interact with warfarin.
- | Talk to your doctor before starting or stopping any vitamin or mineral supplement.

Natural Health Products (e.g. plant-based supplements)

- | Tell your doctor about any extracts, powders or pills that you currently take. This includes nutritional supplements (such as garlic pills, flax seed oil, and fish oils) and herbal medicines (including herbal teas).
- | Many natural health products interfere with warfarin. Some may have effects on warfarin that have not yet been reported.
- | Talk to your doctor before starting or stopping any natural health product.



Notes

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