

## **Warfarin (Coumadin) and Diet**

Warfarin, or Coumadin, is a medication prescribed for individuals who have an increased risk for forming blood clots. Blood clots may block the flow of blood to the heart. Although referred to as a “blood-thinner,” Warfarin does not really thin blood, instead it slows the blood clotting mechanism in the body.

### **How does Warfarin work?**

For blood to clot, it needs to have certain proteins. These proteins are made by the liver and the liver requires Vitamin K to make these proteins. Vitamin K comes from the foods we eat. Warfarin reduces the liver's ability to use Vitamin K to make the proteins needed to clot blood.

### **What do I need to know?**

To achieve the right balance between Vitamin K & Warfarin, you will have blood drawn often. The test measures how long it takes for your blood to form a clot. Your doctor will monitor your Warfarin level & adjust the medication as needed. The dose may fluctuate based on the amount of Vitamin K in your body.

### **Important things to remember?**

Vitamin K is not forbidden for people taking Warfarin. If you enjoy foods that contain Vitamin K, you **CAN** eat them. **Consistency is the most important thing to remember with Vitamin K foods.** The goal is to keep the amount of Vitamin K foods that you eat steady week to week.

The amount of Vitamin K and Warfarin rises & falls slowly in the body, so rather than thinking about it daily, think about your Vitamin K intake on a weekly basis.

### **Tips:**

- Vitamin K is found chiefly in leafy greens – spinach, Swiss chard, kale, broccoli, Brussel sprouts, collard greens, cabbage, parsley, scallions.
- Vitamin K rich foods are very nutritious foods. Vitamin K helps keep bones strong.
- **Remember, you do not need a diet low in Vitamin K.**
- **Your aim is to maintain a consistent intake & avoid drastic changes in Vitamin K intake.**
- Eat what you normally would eat & do not make any major or sudden changes in your diet. For example, if you have a green salad at lunch & a cooked green vegetable at dinner, stay with this pattern most days. Or, if you enjoy Brussels sprouts, spinach, or broccoli once or twice a week, stay with a ½ cup serving once or twice each week. **Again, be consistent!**
- Keep a food diary to track your Vitamin K intake; show the diary to your doctor.
- Pay attention to any changes in your diet - if you cut back to lose weight & decrease your food intake; if you eat more vegetables in the summer; if you feel sick or had surgery and you're not eating as you normally would; if you travel and eat differently than you would at home; or maybe you're attending a family cookout or party; these events may change your Vitamin K intake as they present a departure from your normal diet. Let your doctor know.

**Enjoy the Meals on Wheels. On average, ½ cup of a high Vitamin K vegetable is typically served 1 or 2 times a week as Spinach, Broccoli, Brussel Sprouts, or a Vegetable Blend.**

Information sources: *Vitamin K and Medications*; Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics; [www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org); *A Patient's Guide to Taking Warfarin*; American Heart Association; [www.heart.org](http://www.heart.org)

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