

warfarin

Warfarin is an anticoagulant (blood thinner) that is used to prevent blood clots from forming or growing larger. It is often prescribed for people with certain types of irregular heartbeat and after a heart attack or heart replacement surgery. It works by stopping the formation of substances that cause clots.

Abnormal blood clots can cause serious medical problems as they can block the blood flow through the blood vessels. These clots can also move from the site of formation to other parts of your body. For example, if a clot moves to your brain, it can cause stroke.

Warfarin is also used with other drugs in the treatment of some cancers.

Warfarin is taken as a tablet by mouth, usually once a day. Warfarin partially blocks the re-use of vitamin K in your liver. Vitamin K is needed to make the clotting factors that help the blood to clot and prevent bleeding. Warfarin however does not break up existing blood clots. The objective is to control the blood clotting process without causing severe bleeding, so that a clot does not form and cut off the supply necessary for normal body function.

Many medications interfere with the effectiveness of Warfarin, and so the medical practitioner and SureSlim should be informed of all medications including non-prescription and herbal products/supplements that an individual is taking.

Side effects associated with Warfarin are not common but they can occur. It can turn urine a red-orange, but this effect is harmless. If persistent symptoms such as headache, upset stomach, diarrhoea, and fever and skin rash occur and become severe, the individual should see their Doctor. As Warfarin prevents blood from clotting it can take longer for an individual to stop bleeding when they are cut or injured.

Doctors determine how much Warfarin an individual needs based on their International Normalised Ratio (INR). The INR shows how fast the blood clots, therefore the higher the



number, the longer the time taken for the blood to clot. INR levels need to be checked regularly by the doctor to ensure the Warfarin dosage being taken is always correct. The INR level can be affected by sickness, diet, alcohol, physical activities and other medicines.

Dietary Recommendations

Diet can affect how much Warfarin is needed in order to maintain the proper amount of anticoagulation. Therefore it is important that a well balanced and consistent diet is maintained, much similar to what was being followed when original dosages of Warfarin were established.

Warfarin is affected by Vitamin K. A high Vitamin K intake in the clients' diet can affect their response to Warfarin and lower INR significantly. The client should therefore keep their intake of Vitamin K containing food fairly constant. This does not mean cutting these foods out of their diet but rather eating them in small to moderate amounts. i.e. ½ a cup per meal. The foods highest in Vitamin K are green leafy vegetables such as spinach, cabbage, broccoli, parsley, coriander, alfalfa etc (not peas or green beans), cauliflower, soya bean, canola, or olive oil. No major changes should be made to eating patterns without discussing their diet with the doctor. They must avoid crash dieting and binge eating.

On the program

As some of the recommended foods on the Food Selection List are rich in Vitamin K, which can partly reduce the effects of this medication, it is important that the client has their dosage of Warfarin monitored and adjusted by their medical practitioner for the first two weeks while on their program. Foods rich in Vitamin K include leafy green vegetables, broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, silverbeet, spinach and asparagus. These vegetables should be eaten in moderation, where applicable.

Those who take Warfarin should avoid alcohol, salicylates such as aspirin, and larger than usual amounts of foods rich in vitamin K, which can counteract the effect of Warfarin, or any other drastic change in diet.

References:

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/druginfo/medmaster/a682277.html>

<http://www.mymedications.net/warfarin.php>

<http://www.hukm.ukm.my/pharmacy/CounselingWarfarin.html>