

cist before taking over-the-counter drugs to be sure they don't contain aspirin or other substances that might affect blood clotting. Take prescription drugs only as prescribed by your doctor.

### ***Safety First***

Warfarin causes your blood to clot more slowly, so you must take steps to prevent injuries that could cause bleeding.

- *Use a toothbrush with soft bristles.*
- *Don't use toothpicks or other sharp objects in your mouth.*
- *Don't walk barefoot and don't trim corns or calluses. Use corn or callus removers.*
- *Don't use cutting tools or sharp objects.*
- *Don't engage in rough sports.*
- *Protect yourself from falling—put a non-skid mat in your bathtub or shower, remove hazardous throw rugs, and wear low-heeled shoes with nonslip soles.*
- *If you cut yourself, keep pressure on the injury for 10 minutes.*
- *Remember to tell the dentist that you are taking warfarin.*

### ***Call Your Doctor If:***

- *A cut doesn't stop bleeding in 10 minutes.*
- *A bruise gets larger.*
- *You see blood in our urine, or your stools are black and tarry.*
- *You have a nosebleed, bleeding gums, purplish or reddish spots on your skin, unusual vaginal bleeding or excessive menstrual flow, or bleeding hemorrhoids.*

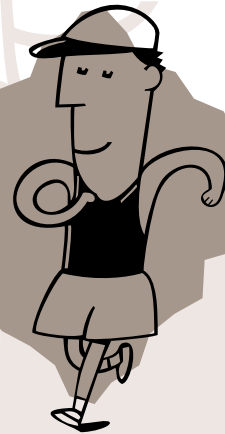


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# Pulmonary Embolism



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**P**ulmonary embolism is a condition in which a blood clot has lodged in a blood vessel inside the lungs. This clot interferes with the ability of that section of the lung to carry oxygen to the tissues of the body.

Most blood clots start in the leg veins, break loose, and travel to the lungs. Clots form from poor circulation, long periods of sitting, prolonged bed rest, or leg injuries.

Anticoagulants (medications that slow down clotting) are given to prevent new clots. If you have a blood clot, it will dissolve in 7 to 10 days without any treatment. The anticoagulant heparin is usually given in a vein for about a week. After you leave the hospital, the oral anticoagulant warfarin sodium (Coumadin) is prescribed for several months.

Improving your circulation is important to help prevent new clots. Your doctor may recommend an exercise program, such as walking. Avoid sitting for long periods of time, and be sure that stockings and clothing are not too tight. If you smoke, you must quit. Smoking constricts the blood vessels and increases the chances of another clot forming.



### Taking Your Coumadin

It is important to take the medication exactly as ordered because too much can cause bleeding and too little can cause clotting.

Regular blood tests are necessary to be certain your blood is clotting the way it should. Here are important guidelines for taking your medications:

- Take the warfarin at the same time of the day. If you take it on alternate days, marking a calendar will help you keep track of when your next dose is due.
- If you skip a dose, don't double up next time; take your next dose as scheduled. If you miss two doses, call your doctor.
- Keep your appointments for blood tests.
- Refill your prescription one week ahead of time so that you won't run out.
- Store warfarin away from heat and cold.



### Helping The Medication Work

Too much vitamin K increases clotting, so don't eat excessive amounts of green leafy vegetables (like spinach and broccoli) and don't take vitamin supplements that contain vitamin K.

Limit alcohol intake to one drink per day. The liver produces many blood clotting factors. Alcohol is broken down (metabolized) by the liver. An excessive intake of alcohol can alter liver function so that it cannot produce enough clotting factors to maintain the normal blood clotting mechanism.

Many drugs can interact with Coumadin. Don't take aspirin or any drugs containing aspirin, which interferes with the platelets that form blood clots. Check with your doctor or pharma-