



Heart Clinic  
of Louisiana

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## Information on Anticoagulation Therapy with Coumadin

COUMADIN (Warfarin) belongs to a class of medications called anticoagulants. Coumadin lengthens the time it takes for a blood clot to form. This makes it harder for clots to form in your blood vessels, and keeps existing clots from getting bigger.

If a clot forms in or travels to your heart, lungs or brain, it can block blood flow to these organs and lead to stroke, pulmonary embolism or other life-threatening illnesses.

Coumadin may have been prescribed to you because you have a condition that increases your risks of developing a harmful clot. This includes heart conditions such as an irregular heart rate, or other condition that decreases your heart's ability to pump blood as effectively as it should. As a result, this causes blood to "pool" or collect in one location in the body making it easier for a clot to form.

If you have had a stroke caused by a clot that traveled to your brain, you may take Coumadin to prevent recurrence.

Coumadin is also prescribed if a clot has already developed in the legs or lungs following a period of inactivity, such as after an operation.

### Duration of Coumadin Therapy

You may need to take this medication for months, or even years depending on your condition and how long your doctor thinks you'll be at risk for developing clots.

### Prothrombin/ INR Testing

A Prothrombin time, or PT/INR, measures the length of time it takes for your blood to form a clot. You will need this blood test to monitor the effects of Coumadin on you. This test is required at least monthly, but may be needed more frequently depending on the time it takes for your blood to clot. It is common when first initiating Coumadin therapy to have blood test every two weeks for the first month of

treatment. This is necessary because many factors can change the way your body responds to Coumadin over time, including diet, illness, or other medications.

The results of your PT/INR will often required that we change the way you take your Coumadin. Without such adjustments, the medication either might not be effective or could lead to serious complications.

After a three month period you may inquire about a home testing monitor which will allow you to obtain your PT/INR at home.

For further information or to schedule an appointment with the Heart Clinic of Louisiana Coumadin Clinic please contact technician Dena Perkins at 504- 349-6426.