



B-SAFE

How to “B-SAFE” While Taking
Coumadin[®]/warfarin



What does it mean to **B-SAFE**?

The **B-SAFE Campaign** is a drug safety campaign that promotes medication safety and awareness. If you are a patient who is taking Coumadin®/warfarin, following the instructions outlined in the **B-SAFE Campaign** (see below) can help to ensure that you are taking your Coumadin®/warfarin in the safest way possible, and are therefore getting the greatest benefit from taking the medication.

- B** – Bring a list of all your medications with you wherever you go
- S** – Standard dose, time, and monitoring
- A** – Adverse effects
- F** – Fall and injury precautions
- E** – Evaluate and examine

First Things First

The **B-SAFE Campaign** encourages patients to know the medications they are taking and to know why they are taking them.

So...what is Coumadin®/warfarin, and why are you taking it?

What Coumadin®/warfarin is:

Coumadin® is the most frequently used blood thinning medication on the market. Warfarin is the generic name and Coumadin® is the brand name product.

What Coumadin®/warfarin does for you:

Coumadin®/warfarin is used to help prevent harmful blood clots from forming in the body. When you get injured, your body's clotting system causes certain blood proteins (called clotting factors) to work together to form a clot. Some people refer to medications like Coumadin®/warfarin as "blood thinners," but these medications do not actually change the thickness of your blood. Instead, Coumadin®/warfarin slows down the formation of clots by lowering some of the clotting factors in your blood.

Not all clots are bad. When you cut yourself, your body forms a clot to stop bleeding. Unfortunately, harmful blood clots are frequent in patients who have diseases of the blood vessels, heart or are limited in their mobility. Harmful blood clots can increase your risk of heart attack, stroke, blood clots in the lungs, and other serious medical problems. Coumadin®/warfarin helps reduce the likelihood of these outcomes by limiting the body's ability to form blood clots.

B-SAFE

BRING a list of all your medications with you
wherever you go:

Many medications can interact with Coumadin®/warfarin, therefore it is important to have a complete medication list to present to your healthcare provider. Make sure that your medication list is:

- ✓ Current
- ✓ Includes everything that you take, including over-the-counter medications as well as vitamins and herbal supplements
- ✓ Includes the reasons why you are taking each medication



B-SAFE

STANDARD dose, time, and monitoring:

Medication use should be standard and consistent.

- ✓ Know your Coumadin®/warfarin dosage, as prescribed by your doctor
- ✓ Take your Coumadin®/warfarin at the same time each day
- ✓ If you miss a dose, contact your doctor
- ✓ Complete INR/PT blood testing as scheduled



B-SAFE

ADVERSE effects:

Know the side effects of Coumadin®/warfarin, as well as other medications and supplements that can interact with it. Bleeding is the main side effect of Coumadin®/warfarin.

- ✓ Talk to your healthcare provider, doctor or pharmacist before starting any new medications including over-the-counter medications, as well as vitamins and herbal supplements
- ✓ Talk to your healthcare provider or doctor about your eating habits. Some foods may negatively interact with Coumadin®/warfarin
- ✓ Avoid alcohol



B-SAFE

FALL and injury precautions:

Internal bleeding can result from falls and injuries while on Coumadin®/warfarin. Seek medical attention immediately if you:

- ✓ Fall
- ✓ Bump your head



B-SAFE

EVALUATE and EXAMINE:

While on Coumadin®/warfarin, seek medical attention immediately if you notice:

- ✓ Any unusual bruising or bleeding
- ✓ Changes in your stools (e.g., dark stools)
- ✓ Experience difficulty in breathing





A Healthcare Collaborative to Improve Drug-Drug Interactions among Medicare Beneficiaries in Washtenaw, Livingston, and Western Wayne Counties

MPRO: Michigan's Healthcare Quality Improvement Organization has partnered with Saint Joseph Mercy Health System to address safety in prescription drug therapy. This drug safety project is targeted at educating Medicare beneficiaries in Washtenaw, Livingston and Western Wayne counties, who are prescribed Coumadin® or generic warfarin about the risk of serious drug-drug interactions (DDI) while on blood thinning medication that can lead to serious complications and how to avoid those complications.

To learn more about this project please visit MPRO's Web site at:

www.mpro.org

This material was prepared by MPRO, the Medicare Quality Improvement Organization for Michigan, under contract with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The contents presented do not necessarily reflect CMS policy. 9SOW-MI-6.2.5-09-02

B-SAFE is for informational use only; see your doctor before pursuing any type of treatment options.

© Trinity Health 2010. All rights reserved.