

DIET, DRINKS AND BLOOD THINNERS



The foods that we eat and the beverages we consume all can have an impact on the viscosity of our blood and importantly on the effectiveness of any blood thinning medication that we may be prescribed. It can be difficult to understand what you can eat and what you should reduce or avoid if you are taking a medication to reduce your risk of blood clots or DVTs. As a starting point, there is no specific diet designed for warfarin, Clexane or any other medication, however, there are guidelines that can help you balance your health and the effectiveness of the medications you have been prescribed. It is important to be aware of what you eat and drink, whilst still maintaining a healthy diet regime containing a variety of natural foods from all food groups.

If you have been prescribed blood thinning medications it may be advisable to seek advice from a dietitian who can advise you on a diet that is balanced and nutritious but also a diet that will not reduce effectiveness of any medications.

Qualified dietitians can be found on <https://daa.asn.au/find-an-apd/> or by telephoning the Australian Dietitians Association of Australia (02) 6189 1200 or email info@daa.asn.au.

Another useful resource: Eating well with Warfarin can be found at <http://www.aspenpharma.com.au/patRes/WarfarinDietBook.pdf>

The warfarin diet booklet is an Australian New Zealand production and contains useful advice a Vitamin K checker, sample meal plans and a food tracker diary. When you first start taking blood thinning medication it is important to track what and when you eat and drink paying particular attention to foods that contain Vitamin K and alcohol. This is because Vitamin K and alcohol can lessen warfarin's effectiveness. This doesn't mean to give up vitamin K containing foods however it will mean being consistent in your daily consumption of these foods. Variations in eating vitamin K containing foods may cause the PT/INR levels (the laboratory test that measures the effect of Coumadin) to alter.

Vitamin K is an important nutrient and adequate intake level forms a part of a balanced diet. Recommended levels for adult men is 120 micrograms (mcg) and for adult women, 90 mcg.

Eating small amounts of foods that are rich in vitamin K shouldn't cause a problem, you should try to avoid eating or drinking large amounts of:

- Kale
- Spinach
- Brussels sprouts
- Parsley
- Collard greens
- Mustard greens
- Chard
- Green tea
- Cranberry juice and
- Alcohol

IMPORTANT DIET CONSIDERATIONS

- DO NOT EAT GRAPEFRUIT OR DRINK GRAPEFRUIT JUICE
- Avocados vitamin K content can vary from avocado to avocado and a serving of avocado dip or guacamole can contain a very high amount of vitamin K. Therefore it is best to avoid avocado and foods containing avocado.
- Fresh herbs have only small amounts vitamin K than the dried version of the same herb, therefore herbs in small amounts are fine but remember that fresh is best however limit these to a teaspoon or two at most.
- Commercially prepared spreads such as margarine and mayonnaise have blends of vegetable oils and may have varying amounts of each type of oil; therefore it is difficult to predict Vitamin K content. If you need to use a spread than butter is a better option and if a salad dressing of mayonnaise is needed than a homemade version is best.
- Canned Fish such as salmon, tuna and sardines which are normally low in Vitamin K should be consumed in water packed varieties rather than oil.

OTHER SPECIAL PRECAUTIONS

You should talk with your doctor about:

- any over-the-counter medications, vitamins or herbal supplements that you are taking or considering taking,
- any major changes in your diet and before starting a diet, or your change your eating pattern through travelling, hospitalisation, or planned changes due to pending surgery.
- if you are unable to eat for several days or have ongoing stomach upset, diarrhoea or fever, and
- if your medications are changed by any of your health management team.

All of these things can impact on your PT/INR test and the effectiveness of your blood thinning medication.

Further helpful information can be found at

- www.coumadin.com
- www.coumadincookbook.com
- www.aspenpharma.com.au/patRes/WarfarinDietBook.pdf
- www.nps.org.au/australian-prescriber/articles/managing-warfarin-therapy-in-the-community