

Warfarin

(war-far-in)

Category: Anticoagulant (Blood Thinner)

Other Names for this Medication: Coumadin®

Common Dosage Forms: **Veterinary:** None. **Human:** 1 mg, 2 mg, 2.5 mg, 3 mg, 4 mg, 5 mg, 6 mg, 7.5 mg, & 10 mg tablets.

This information sheet does not contain all available information for this medication. It is to help answer commonly asked questions and help you give the medication safely and effectively to your animal. If you have other questions or need more information about this medication, contact your veterinarian or pharmacist.

Key Information

- ▶ Many drugs and foods can interact with warfarin and can either increase the risk for bleeding or reduce warfarin's anticoagulant (anti-clotting) effects. Before starting a new medicine (including over-the-counter [OTC; without a prescription] medicines) or stopping drugs that your animal is currently taking, talk with your veterinarian or pharmacist.
- ▶ Do not allow your animal to be in situations where it might be injured or cut as serious bleeding could occur. If abnormal bleeding is seen, contact your veterinarian immediately.
- ▶ To be sure the dose is correct, routine blood tests will be needed. Do not miss these important follow-up visits.

How is this medication useful?

Warfarin is a blood thinner that is used to prevent the formation of blood clots in animals with circulation problems.

The FDA (U.S. Food & Drug Administration) has approved this drug for use in humans but it is not officially approved for use in animals. The FDA allows veterinarians to prescribe products containing this drug in different species or for other conditions in certain situations. You and your veterinarian can discuss why this drug is the most appropriate choice.

What should I tell my veterinarian to see if this medication can be safely given?

Many things might affect how well this drug will work in your animal. Be sure to discuss the following with your veterinarian so together you can make the best treatment decisions.

- ▶ Other drugs can interact with warfarin, so be sure to tell your veterinarian and pharmacist what medications (including vitamins, supplements, or herbal therapies) you give your animal, including the amount and time you give each.
- ▶ Tell your veterinarian about any conditions or diseases your pet may have now or has had in the past.
- ▶ If your animal has been treated for the same disease or condition in the past, tell your veterinarian about the treatment and how well it did or didn't work.
- ▶ If your animal is pregnant or nursing, talk to your veterinarian about the risks of using this drug.
- ▶ Tell your veterinarian and pharmacist about any medication side effects (including allergic reactions, lack of appetite, diarrhea, itching, hair loss) your pet has developed in the past.

When should this medication not be used or be used very carefully?

No drug is 100% safe in all patients, but your veterinarian will discuss with you any specific concerns about using this drug in your animal.

This drug **SHOULD NOT** be used in patients:

- ▶ With bleeding problems (eg, stomach ulcers, broken blood vessels) or in those about to undergo surgery.
- ▶ That are anemic (too low red blood cells).
- ▶ That are pregnant.
- ▶ With liver disease.

This drug should be used **WITH CAUTION:**

- ▶ In working animals or performance horses as the risk of uncontrollable bleeding from cuts or bruises is much greater.

If your pet has any of these conditions, talk to your veterinarian about the potential risks versus benefits.

What are the side effects of this medication?

Side effects that may be serious or indicate a serious problem:

- ▶ Bleeding. The main side effect of warfarin is a greater chance for bleeding; it may cause nosebleeds, bruising, bloody vomit, bloody or tarry-colored (black) stools, and other bleeding problems that can lead to anemia (too low red blood cells) or serious blood loss.

If you see any signs of bleeding, contact your veterinarian immediately.

If my pet gets too much of this medication (an overdose), what should I do?

Overdoses of warfarin can be serious. It is very important to follow the label instructions exactly as overdoses can cause significant bleeding. If you witness or suspect an overdose, contact your veterinarian or an animal poison control center immediately for further advice. Animal poison control centers that are open 24 hours a day include: **Pet Poison HELPLINE** (855-764-7661) and **ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center** (888-426-4435); a consultation fee is charged for these services.

How should this medication be given?

For this medication to work, give it exactly as your veterinarian has prescribed. It's a good idea to always check the prescription label to be sure you are giving the drug correctly.

- ▶ Warfarin should be given by mouth once daily at about the same time every day.
- ▶ The active drug in commercially available warfarin tablets may be unevenly distributed throughout the tablet. If your veterinarian prescribes ½ or ¼ tablets, crush the whole tablet, mix up the powder and then give ½ or ¼ of the powder. It may be better to have your pharmacist make (compound) capsules of

the exact dose or formulate a liquid to achieve the correct dose.

- ▶ The drug may be given either with food or on an empty stomach. If your pet vomits or acts sick after receiving the drug on an empty stomach, try giving the next dose with food or a small treat. If vomiting continues, contact your veterinarian.
- ▶ Compounded liquid forms of this medication must be measured carefully. Your veterinarian or pharmacist can help by providing special measuring spoons or syringes.
- ▶ If you have difficulty getting your animal to take the medicine, contact your veterinarian or pharmacist for tips to help with dosing and reducing the stress of medication time.
- ▶ This medication can be given for various lengths of time. Be sure you understand how long your veterinarian wants you to continue giving this medication. Prescription refills may be necessary before the therapy will be complete. Before stopping this medication, talk to your veterinarian, as there may be important reasons to continue its use.

What should I do if I miss giving a dose of this medication?

If you miss a dose, give it when you remember, but if it is close to the time for the next dose, skip the dose you missed and give it at the next scheduled time. After that, return to the regular dosing schedule. Do not double-up or give extra doses.

How should I store this medication?

- ▶ Store this medication in the original prescription bottle or an approved dosage reminder container (ie, pill minder) at room temperature.
- ▶ If your veterinarian or pharmacist has made (compounded) a special formulation for your animal, follow the storage recommendations and expiration date for the product.
- ▶ Keep away from children and other animals.

Can handling this medication be hazardous to me, my family, or other pets?

Because this drug has a higher risk for causing birth defects, pregnant women should be very careful not to accidentally take it. Wear disposable gloves when giving doses or handling the drug and avoid inhaling any dust from split or crushed tablets. Skin or eyes exposed to powder or liquids containing the drug should immediately be washed or rinsed off thoroughly, and your physician contacted.

How should I dispose of this medication if I don't use it all?

- ▶ Do not flush this medication down the toilet or wash it down the sink. If a community drug “take-back” program is available, use this option. If there is no take-back program, mix the drug with coffee grounds or cat litter (to make it undesirable to children and animals and unrecognizable to people who might go through your trash), place the mixture in a sealable plastic bag to keep it from leaking out, and throw the bag out with the regular trash.
- ▶ Do not save leftover medication for future use or give it to others to use.

What other information is important for this medication?

- ▶ Your veterinarian will need to check blood clotting times periodically to make sure that your animal is getting the right dose of warfarin. Do not miss these important follow-up visits.
- ▶ Do not allow your animal to be in situations where it might be injured or cut as serious bleeding could occur.
- ▶ Use of this drug may not be allowed in certain animal competitions. Check rules and regulations before entering your animal in a competition while this medication is being administered.

If you have any other questions or concerns about this medication, contact your veterinarian or pharmacist.