

For further information about this service contact:

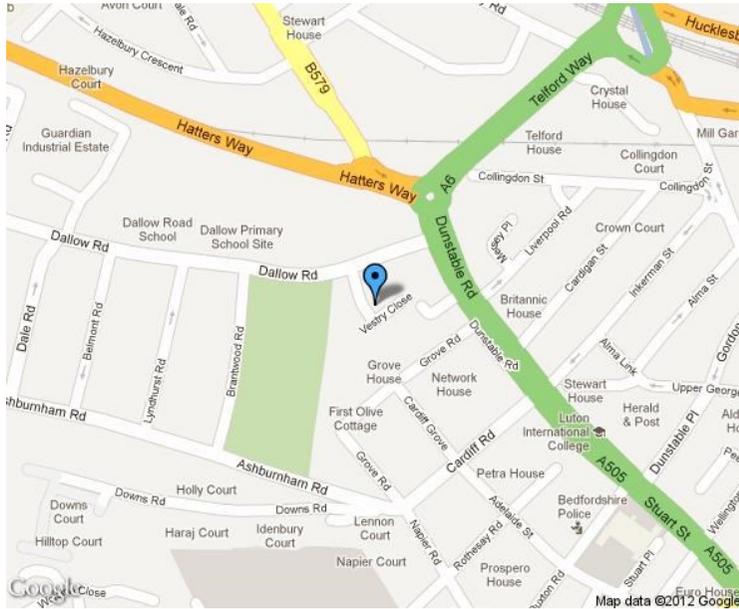
Luton Treatment Centre, Vestry Close, Luton LU1 1AR

Tel: 0333 405 0040

Where is Luton Treatment Centre?

Free parking is available at the Luton Treatment Centre - follow the driveway around to the back of the building from the entrance.

Disabled parking and access to the building is also located at the back of the building – follow the signs



The Anticoagulant Clinic Luton Treatment Centre

If you require this information in a different format such as in large print or on audio tape, or in a different language please contact the service on the details above.

To find out how we use what we know about you (Privacy Notice) or how to access our buildings (AccessAble), please visit www.cambscommunityservices.nhs.uk and follow the links or please contact us.



If you have any compliments about this service or suggestions for improvements, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service on 0300 131 1000 (charges may apply depending on your network) or email: ccs-tr.pals@nhs.net.

For free, confidential health advice and information 24 hours a day, 365 days a year please contact NHS 111.



Further information

There are a range of patient organisations that can give you further information and support.

British Heart Foundation

Tel 0300 330 3311

www.bhf.org.uk

For information regarding cardiac issues- Atrial Fibrillation, Replacement Heart Valves

Anticoagulation Europe

www.anticoagulationeurope.org

PO Box 405

Bromley

Kent

BR2 9WP

For information and support on anticoagulation issues.

Thrombosis UK

www.thrombosisuk.org

Tel 0300 772 9603

For information related to DVT and Pulmonary Embolism.

NHS Information

www.nhs.uk

For general information

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General Anticoagulant Information

Warfarin is the main oral anticoagulant used in the UK. Oral means it's taken by mouth. An anticoagulant is a medicine that stops blood clotting.

Clotting (thickening) is a complex process involving a number of substances called clotting factors.

Clotting factors are produced by the liver and help control bleeding. They work with cells that trigger the clotting process (platelets) to ensure blood clots effectively.

To produce some of the clotting factors, the liver needs a good supply of vitamin K.

Warfarin blocks one of the enzymes (proteins) that uses vitamin K to produce clotting factors. This disrupts the clotting process, making it take longer for the blood to clot.

When warfarin is prescribed

Anticoagulant medicines, such as warfarin, are often prescribed for people who've had a condition caused by a blood clot, or at risk of developing harmful blood clots such as:

- deep vein thrombosis - a blood clot within a deep vein in the body, usually in a leg,
- pulmonary embolism - a blood clot in the lungs.
- a replacement or mechanical (prosthetic) heart valve
- a stroke
- an irregular heart rhythm, known as atrial fibrillation
- a blood clotting disorder, such as thrombophilia
- an increased risk of blood clots following surgery

Taking warfarin

The aim of warfarin therapy is to decrease the blood's tendency to clot, but not stop it clotting completely. This means the dose of warfarin you're taking must be carefully monitored and, if necessary, adjusted.

The international normalised ratio (INR) is a measure of how long it takes your blood to clot. The longer it takes your blood to clot, the higher your INR. Your INR will be used to determine the dose of warfarin you need to take.

Although there are now new anticoagulants that don't require regular monitoring – rivaroxaban, apixaban and dabigatran – most people who need an anticoagulant will be prescribed warfarin.

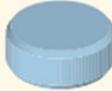
How long you'll need to take warfarin for will depend on the condition for which it's been prescribed. Ask the Anticoagulant Nurse if you're not sure.

It's very important that you take warfarin exactly as directed. Don't change your prescribed dose unless the Nurse in charge of your Anticoagulation advises you to.

Warfarin is taken once a day, usually in the evening washed down with a full glass of water. It's important to take your dose at the same time each day, before, during or after a meal.

You may be given a number of different strength tablets to make up your dose, and it is important that you become familiar with the different strengths and colours that you need to take.

In the UK, the colours of warfarin tablets are:

0.5mg (500 micrograms) – white	
1mg – brown	
3mg – blue	
5mg – pink	

Other useful information

Surgery and dental work

Because of the risk of bleeding, your dose of warfarin may need to be lowered or stopped a few days before having an operation or dental work.

Tell the surgeon or dentist that you're taking warfarin. You should also tell anyone else involved with your care, such as an anticoagulant nurse, if you need an operation so they can make arrangements.

Having vaccinations

You can have vaccinations while taking warfarin.

If the vaccine is normally given by injection into the muscle, then providing you're up to date with your INR testing (see above), and that the results are within the correct range, you can have the injection as normal into muscle. This is known as an intramuscular (IM) injection.

Alternatively, the injection can be given into the layer of fat underneath your skin. This is known as a subcutaneous injection. Firm pressure applied to the site for 10 minutes after the vaccination may reduce potential bruising.

Playing sports

You can play sports while taking warfarin, but because of the risk of bleeding:

- contact sports that could lead to a head injury, such as football, rugby, cricket and hockey, are best avoided if played competitively
- martial arts and kickboxing must be avoided

You can continue to take part in non-contact sports, such as running, athletics, cycling and racquet sports. However, make sure you wear protective clothing, such as a cycle helmet.

Going on holiday

Tell your GP or anticoagulant nurse if you're going on holiday, in this country or abroad, and arrange to have your INR checked before you go. If you're going to be away longer than a month, you may need to arrange to have your INR checked while you're away. Make sure you have enough warfarin tablets to last for the duration of your trip.

Body piercings

Body piercings aren't recommended while taking warfarin because of the increased risk of bleeding and risk of infection

Alcohol

Getting drunk or binge drinking is dangerous while taking warfarin. It may increase the effect of the drug, increasing the risk of bleeding.

The latest guidelines on drinking alcohol state that regularly drinking more than 14 units of alcohol a week (for both men and women) risks damaging your health.

Fourteen units is equivalent to six pints of average-strength beer or 10 small glasses of low-strength wine.

People with liver disease who are taking warfarin shouldn't drink alcohol at all.

Different brands of warfarin tablets may have different markings to those shown above. Other anticoagulants may come in different strengths and colours. You may need a mixture of different coloured tablets to make up your dose.

Do not confuse the dose in mg with the number of tablets that you take.

Missed doses

If you forget to take your dose of warfarin in the evening but remember before midnight on the same day, take the missed dose.

If midnight has passed, leave that dose and take your normal dose the next day at the usual time.

If you usually take warfarin in the morning and forget to take it at your normal time, take it as soon as you remember and continue as normal.

However, if it's time to take your next dose, don't take a double dose to catch up, unless the Anticoagulation Nurse has specifically advised you to.

If you're not sure what to do about a missed dose of warfarin please call our clinic and we can advise you. You can also call NHS 111 for advice or speak to a pharmacist.

Who shouldn't take warfarin

The following people shouldn't take warfarin:

- Pregnant women – it can affect the development of the baby. Women who think they have become pregnant while on warfarin should seek a pregnancy test as soon as possible and, if this is positive, an urgent appointment with a doctor.
- You may breast feed while taking anticoagulant medication.
- People with uncontrolled high blood pressure (severe hypertension)
- People with a high risk of internal bleeding – for example, those with a stomach ulcer
- People with a bleeding disorder – such as haemophilia.

Side effects of warfarin

Bleeding is the main side effect associated with warfarin, as it slows down the blood's normal clotting ability.

You're at greatest risk of bleeding in the first few weeks of starting treatment with warfarin and when you're unwell.

You should therefore seek urgent medical attention if you:

- pass blood in your urine or faeces
- pass black faeces
- have severe bruising
- have long nose bleeds – lasting more than 10 minutes
- have bleeding gums
- cough up blood or have blood in your vomit
- experience unusual headaches
- Women may experience heavier periods while they are taking oral anticoagulants and may wish to discuss this with their GP or Anticoagulant nurse.

Take extra care to avoid cutting yourself while taking anticoagulant medication because of the risk of excessive bleeding.

For example, you should:

- take care when shaving and brushing your teeth
- wear protective clothing when gardening, sewing or playing contact sports
- use insect repellent to avoid insect bites and stings.

Seek urgent medical attention if you're taking warfarin and you:

- have a fall or accident
- experience a significant blow to your head
- are unable to stop any bleeding
- have signs of bleeding, such as bruising.

Skin rashes and hair loss are also common side effects of warfarin.

Contact your Anticoagulant Nurse responsible for your care if you experience any persistent side effects while taking warfarin.

Interactions

Medicines

Warfarin can interact with many other medicines. The patient information leaflet that comes with a medicine should tell you if it's safe to take with warfarin. Please inform the Anticoagulant clinic if you start or stop any other medicines. You may be advised to have an INR blood test within 5 to seven days of starting or stopping any other medicine. This is to ensure your INR remains within the desired range.

If you are planning to buy over-the-counter medicines, including alternative remedies, tell the pharmacist that you are taking an oral anticoagulant and show them your anticoagulant alert card. They can then advise you on medicines that are safe for you to take.

Food and drink

It is important to eat a well-balanced diet. Some food and drink can interfere with the effect of warfarin if consumed in large amounts, including foods that are rich in vitamin K.

Foods containing large amounts of vitamin K include:

- green leafy vegetables, such as broccoli and spinach
- chick peas,
- liver
- egg yolks
- vegetable oils
- cereal grains containing wheat bran and oats
- mature and blue cheese
- Avocado

Small amounts of vitamin K can also be found in meat and dairy foods. When your first dose of warfarin is prescribed, it doesn't matter how much vitamin K you're eating because the dosage will be based on your current blood clotting levels.

Try to take the same amount of these foods on a regular basis. It is the change in the vitamin K intake that affects your INR result. Consult the Anticoagulant Nurse responsible for your care before making any significant changes to your diet while taking warfarin. If your diet changes greatly over a seven-day period, you should have an INR test.

Drinking cranberry juice can also affect your INR and so should be avoided altogether if possible.