

Fast Facts

- Warfarin is generally started on day 1 or 2 of heparin or low molecular weight (LMW) heparin therapy. Heparin or LMW heparin administration should overlap with warfarin for a minimum of 6 days and until INR (International Normalized Ratio) is within the desired therapeutic range on 2 consecutive days at least 24 hours apart when initiating warfarin therapy. In general, warfarin therapy should be initiated with consultation from hematology unless the patient is in a critical care unit or on the cardiology or cardiothoracic surgery service.
- Warfarin loading period is 4-7 days for most patients before a stable maintenance phase is achieved. Anticoagulation may be seen within 24 hours due to inhibition of factor VII but peak anticoagulation activity is not achieved for 72-96 hours due to factor II inhibition (2-3 days after 1st therapeutic INR is achieved).
- Warfarin inhibits thrombin formation by interfering with vitamin K metabolism. Age affects the degree of inhibition. Warfarin is rarely recommended for children < 2 months of age
- Available products at CMH:
 - Warfarin 1 mg, 2 mg, 4 mg and 5 mg tablets.
 - Doses should be rounded to the nearest 0.5mg wherever possible to allow for dispensing in tablet form.
 - Parents may be instructed to crush tablets, mix with water, measure dose and administer immediately if smaller increments are essential.
 - INR is calculated from the measured PT. If PT is ordered, INR will be calculated.
- **INR/PT** is used to monitor the effects of warfarin.

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These guidelines do not establish a standard of care to be followed in every case. It is recognized that each case is different and those individuals involved in providing health care are expected to use their judgment in determining what is in the best interests of the patient based on the circumstances existing at the time. It is impossible to anticipate all possible situations that may exist and to prepare guidelines for each. Accordingly these guidelines should guide care with the understanding that departures from them may be required at times.

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