Vitamin K and Anticoagulants

Anticoagulant Therapy
You have been prescribed an anticoagulant medication (Coumadin®) to lower the risk of excess blood clotting. The amount of medication you need is based on the length of time it takes your blood to clot. Blood clotting is also affected by the foods you eat and supplements you take, especially those that contain vitamin K.

Vitamin K is involved in a series of chemical reactions that help form blood clots. Anticoagulant medications act by decreasing the clotting activity of the vitamin. Therefore, the amount of vitamin K eaten in foods will affect how well your anticoagulant medication works.

General Dietary Guidelines
Vitamin K is found in vegetables and some fruits. Dark green leafy vegetables are especially high in the vitamin. Your doctor will adjust your medication dose based on the amount of vitamin K you typically get through your diet.

• Eat a **consistent** amount of foods that have vitamin K.

• Note **how much** and **how often** you eat foods high in vitamin K.

Limit yourself to one serving per day from the table of high vitamin K foods on the right.

If you normally eat more than one serving per day, inform your doctor of your typical intake so that your medication may be adjusted.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Foods High in Vitamin K</th>
<th>Serving Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Broccoli (cooked)</td>
<td>½ cup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brussels sprouts (frozen, boiled)</td>
<td>½ cup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collard greens (fresh, boiled)</td>
<td>½ cup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kale (fresh, boiled)</td>
<td>½ cup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mustard greens (fresh, boiled)</td>
<td>½ cup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parsley (raw)</td>
<td>10 sprigs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spinach (fresh, boiled)</td>
<td>½ cup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spinach (raw)</td>
<td>1 cup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swiss chard (fresh, boiled)</td>
<td>½ cup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turnip greens (frozen, boiled)</td>
<td>½ cup</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The following foods are lower in vitamin K and can be eaten as desired:

- Beans and lentils
- Other leafy greens – iceberg lettuce, butterhead lettuce, green leaf lettuce, cabbage, bok choy
- Vegetables – celery, carrots, tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, peas, asparagus, okra
- Fruits/berries – pears, plums, kiwis, blackberries, blueberries
- Meat, fish, poultry and eggs
- Cereals and grains
- Dairy products including milk, cheese and yogurt

**Other Factors Affecting Blood Clotting**

*Herbal supplements*

Many over-the-counter herbal remedies have anticoagulant properties that may affect your blood clotting ability. Because little is known of their function, discuss with your physician before using any herbal supplements.

*Alcohol*

Drinking alcohol (beer, wine, liquor) will decrease your clotting ability. It is best to avoid alcohol or limit the amount to less than one serving per day. Tell your doctor of your typical intake.

*Vitamins*

Taking high doses of vitamins can interfere with the clotting actions of Coumadin. Inform your doctor of the vitamins and doses you currently take. If you continue taking the supplements, take the same dose every day.

**Additional Resources and References**

