

CURE CARDIOVASCULAR CONSULTANTS

ANTICOAGULATION THERAPY MONITORING

The goal of warfarin therapy is to decrease the clotting tendency of blood, not to prevent clotting completely. Therefore, the effect of warfarin must be monitored carefully with blood testing. On the basis of the results of the blood test, your daily dose of warfarin will be adjusted to keep your clotting time within a target range. The blood test used to measure the time it takes for blood to clot is referred to as a prothrombin time test, or protime (PT). The PT is reported as the International Normalized Ratio (INR).

The INR is a standardized way of expressing the PT value. The INR ensures that PT results obtained by different laboratories can be compared. It is important to monitor the INR (at least once a month and sometimes as often as twice weekly) to make sure that the level of warfarin remains in the effective range. If the INR is too low, blood clots will not be prevented, but if the INR is too high, there is an increased risk of bleeding. This is why those who take warfarin must have their blood tested so frequently.

Unlike most medications that are administered as a fixed dose, warfarin dosing is adjusted according to the INR blood test results; therefore, the dose usually changes over time.