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Cranberry & Warfarin OK Together

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In a recent update of the Coumadin (Warfarin) prescribing information and the corresponding Medication Guide¹, the caution statement to avoid cranberry juice or cranberry products while patients are taking warfarin has been removed.

The Medication Guide was updated because, while several case reports²⁻³ reported a potential interaction between cranberry products and warfarin, more recent clinical trials that studied patients before and after consuming cranberry juice found no clinically significant interaction. Two of the most recent studies have found similar results showing that consumption of 8-16 ounces of cranberry juice daily for up to 1-2 weeks was safe.⁴⁻⁵ Neither study evaluated any cranberry products other than cranberry juice; however, the revised labeling¹ has removed caution against cranberry juice and other cranberry products allowing warfarin patients to also consume alternate cranberry products.

The effect of large amounts of cranberry products (~0.5-2 liters of juice, or 30-120g of sauce, or 1,00mg capsules per day) for long periods of time on warfarin variability still remains to be elucidated. Thus thorough patient education is key in order to facilitate the safe use of cranberry products in patients on warfarin. Highlighting the importance of type, appropriate amount, and duration of cranberry product consumption is especially important until further data becomes available on consumption of larger product amounts for longer time durations. See below for a Patient's Guide to Cranberry Products and Coumadin (Warfarin) that you might find helpful in education of your patients.

A Patient's Guide to Cranberry Products and Coumadin (Warfarin)

Coumadin (Warfarin) is a commonly prescribed "blood thinner." Its therapeutic effect varies in any given individual, and even minor variations can lead to problems. Therefore, your healthcare providers may advise against taking certain foods and herbal supplements. Are cranberry products safe to consume while also taking warfarin?

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Clinical trials that evaluated the effects of cranberry consumption on warfarin therapy have not found a clinically significant interaction. According to these data, consumption of cranberry products appears to be safe in patients taking warfarin. The Coumadin (Warfarin) prescribing information and medication guide were recently updated, and no longer list cranberries as a potentially interacting food.

Recommendations

- Moderate intake of cranberries, such as drinking cranberry juice, about 1-2 glasses per day is safe in patients taking warfarin.
- The effect of drinking or eating extremely large amounts of cranberry products (~0.5-2 liters of juice, 30-120g of sauce, or 1,00mg capsules per day) for long periods of time on warfarin variability requires further investigation.
- Talk to your healthcare provider before large increases in cranberry products in your diet for extended periods of time.

Check your skin closely for easy bruising or red spots. This may be a sign of bleeding. If you notice any bleeding, notify your doctor right away.



References

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