



Oxford University Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Information for Patients Considering INR Self-Testing

Information for patients



What is INR self testing?

INR self testing is the process of checking your INR level yourself by taking a prick of blood from your finger tip and applying the blood to a test strip inserted into a small machine called a 'coaguchek' machine. This can be done at home, or if you are travelling for work or leisure.

Why might I want to consider self-testing?

- If you are on long term treatment with warfarin and would like to take your own INR blood tests.
- If you find it difficult to get to your GP practice for venous blood tests.
- It is difficult to get blood from your veins.

Are self-test machines available on prescription?

No, unfortunately not currently. If you wish to start self-testing your INR you will need to buy a self-test machine from Roche diagnostics limited, who manufacture them. Your GP will prescribe you test strips and finger prick lancets you need for self-testing.

Do self-test machines have a limited life span?

Yes, the coaguchek INRange machine has a life span of 600 INR tests. Once 600 tests are carried out a new machine will need to be purchased. However, as long as the machine is only used to test INRs when necessary, it will last many years without needing replacing.

Are all patients suitable for self-testing?

No, self-testing is not suitable for some people. Reasons self-testing may not be suitable include:

- Patients with certain conditions - for these people the only option for INR testing is venous INRs (a blood test taken from a vein in your arm).
- Patients who are on very short-term treatment with warfarin.
- People who do not have good manual dexterity or eyesight to perform these tests, and don't have someone who can be trained to perform the test for them.

Your suitability for self-testing will be assessed by our anticoagulation team before you are advised to buy a self-test machine.

How do you assess my suitability for self-testing?

We will firstly review your notes to ensure that an alternative form of medication would not be suitable for you instead of warfarin. If you need to remain on warfarin we will arrange to see you in clinic to take an INR blood test using our self-test machine. We will also take an INR blood test from a vein in your arm. We will compare the two results and check that they are similar to each other – this is called a venous parallel test.

Do I need training to perform self-tests?

Yes, you will need to attend 2 to 3 training sessions at our anticoagulation clinic at either the Horton or Nuffield Hospital, each lasting between 45 minutes and an hour, where a specialist practitioner will show you how to use the self-test INR machine.

If I am unable to perform a self-test is it possible for someone to carry one out for me?

Yes, a family member or carer can carry out self-tests for you if they are able to attend training sessions with you.

What would be expected of me as a self-tester?

As a self-tester we will ask that you carry out a self-test INR on the test date specified by our warfarin dosing team (a day early or late is no problem). We ask that you telephone or email with your INR result within 24 hours of taking it, and before 3pm on a working day. We will reply by email, telephone, or post (depending on your preference) with your next dose instructions the same day. (If your INR is communicated to us after 3pm or on a weekend or bank holiday, your next dose instructions will be sent to you the next working day).

If your machine returns a result of more than 4.5 or less than 1.5 we will ask you to repeat the finger prick test immediately, and send us both readings. If your machine returns a result of 8.0 we will need you to have a venous INR immediately, ideally at our clinic, and if this isn't possible at your GP practice or walk-in blood test facility (if away from home).

We will also require you to attend an appointment at our clinic (either at the Nuffield or Horton Hospital) every six months for a 'coaguChek review' appointment, so that we can check your machine and perform a venous parallel test. You will need to bring your machine to this appointment.

Getting started as a self-tester

If you decide that you would like to self-test your INRs, please see below for information on how the process works and what happens next.

1. Please call our team to discuss. You will find the contact details at the end of this booklet.
2. Once you have discussed with our team, they will book an appointment for you to attend one of our clinics in either Oxford or Banbury for a venous parallel test.
3. If your venous parallel test is satisfactory, you will be given a letter to take to your GP to inform them of your interest in self-testing. Your GP will need to agree to prescribe testing strips and finger prick lancets before you buy the self-test machine.
4. When your GP agrees to prescribe you test strips and lancets, you will be ready to buy the machine - do not worry we will give you all the information you need to order it.
5. Once the machine arrives, please call us to make an appointment for your first training session.
6. At your training sessions you will be asked to bring your machine. The practitioner will help you set it up, practice using it, and will give you a checklist to help you remember these steps. You will be asked to complete a short theory test to ensure you understand self-testing.
7. Once you have completed your training sessions you will be asked to sign a self-testers agreement. Now you are ready as a self-tester.
8. Your GP will be informed that you have been signed off as a self-tester. We will see you every 6 months after this for a 'coaguchek review' appointment. You will be sent an invitation letter to this through the post. If you have any problems with your machine or any questions you can contact us in between these appointments any time during clinic opening hours.

Any other questions?

What if I want more training?

If you don't feel sure and you want to practice more, please let us know and we can arrange an extra session for you.

What if I am difficult to bleed?

In our service we have equipment to help us overcome this challenge, including a use vein finder (scanner for look for veins) and different blood tube sizes that allow us to run the same test without needing as much blood.

For further information, please contact us using the contact details below:

Oxford

Telephone: 01865 857 555 or 01865 857 556
Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm

Banbury

Telephone: 01295 229 224
Tuesday to Thursday 9am to 5pm
Email: AC.Services@ouh.nhs.uk

Further information

If you would like an interpreter, please speak to the department where you are being seen.

Please also tell them if you would like this information in another format, such as:

- Easy Read
- large print
- braille
- audio
- electronic
- another language.

We have tried to make the information in this leaflet meet your needs. If it does not meet your individual needs or situation, please speak to your healthcare team. They are happy to help.

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Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
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