

ANTICOAGULATION EUROPE

Where can I get my INR while abroad?

A common question I find when answering the telephone for Anti Coagulation Europe is: 'Where can I go to have my INR while I am on holiday?'

In an ideal world patients would be able to bring their regular test forward or postpone it until they are at home again. However for some patients this just isn't possible.

I felt it would therefore be useful to compile a list of where to go in common holiday destinations. If in doubt I normally suggest they ask at their hotel, a doctor's surgery or a local pharmacy. If in a group the rep. may be able to help as they will generally have local knowledge.

I also contacted MASTA, the Medical Advice Service for Travellers Abroad, who advised travellers to contact the British Embassy or High Commission at their destination.

The list below is by no means complete, and I would greatly appreciate any further information anyone reading this article has.

Country	Anticoagulation in the local language	Warfarin or similar drug	Where to go or ask about INRs
France	Traitement anticoagulant oral	Fluindione/ Acenocoumarol	Central 'laboratoire analyse' in all towns, ask for 'analyse INR'* if not district nurse, doctor or pharmacy, private or hospital lab.
Germany	Gerinnungshemmer	Marcumar/ Phenprocoumon/ Coumadin	Local hospital – INR result should be available the same day. Cost is less than Euro20
Austria	Gerinnungshemmer	Marcoumar/ Sintrom	Private laboratory/ GP (Allgemeine Arzt), Ambulanz department of many hospitals**
Spain/ Balearic Islands	anticoagulation	Aldocumar/ Sintrom/Syntrom	Private Hospital/ Clinic/ Health Centre
Portugal	Anticoagulação, terapeutica anticoagulente oral	Varfine	Health clinic/laboratory
Norway	antikoagulasjons-behandling		Private medical centre or clinic, outpatients department of a public hospital (legevakt)
Denmark	AK-behandling		Hospital (sygehus)
Sweden		Warfarin	

Finland	Anticoagulant-tihoitonsa	Warfarin	GP/ Hospital
Holland	Antistollings-behandeling	Phenprocoumon/ Acenocoumarol	Go to a GP They cannot advise on correct Warfarin dose, you will have to phone your clinic or doctor
Belgium	Antistollings-behandeling		Hospital/ doctor/ Roche +32 2 247 48 38
Italy	Terapia anticoagulante orale	Acencoumarole-Sintrom®/ Warfarin - Comadin®	Centro di Sorveglianza dell'Anticoagualto, hospital or doctor
Switzerland	Gerinnungshemmer	Cumarine	Doctor specializing in 'Innere(internal)/ Allgemeine(general) Medizin'
Eire	Anticoagulation	Warfarin	GP/ hospital
Greece		Varfarin	Private laboratory or hospital
Crete		Varfarin	Pharmacy, medical centre or Heraklion hospital
Cyprus		Varfarin	Private or general hospitals
Russia		Warfarin/ Nafarin	
Turkey		Orfarin/ Warfarin	
South Africa			Walk into nearest hospital and ask for an INR test. You will have to phone about 3 hours later for the result. It will cost £4.80.
America	Anticoagulation	Warfarin/ Coumadin/ Jantoven/ Miradon	Make an appointment with a doctor who will refer you for an INR
Canada	Anticoagulation	Coumadin®- Warfarin, Sintrim®- Nicoumalone	Make an appointment with a doctor who will refer you for an INR
Venezuela		Anasmol/ Cumar	Anticoagulation and/ or Thrombosis Clinic
Argentina		Circuit/ Coumader	
Australia		Warfarin/ Marevan	Make an appointment with a doctor who will refer you for an INR

New Zealand		Warfarin	Find a drop in clinic. The result is phoned through later in the day. There is no charge as New Zealand and the UK have reciprocal arrangements for INRs.
Indonesia		Simarc-2	
Singapore		Warfarin	Raffles Hospital, Heart Centre Level 12, 585 North Bridge Road Singapore 188770 +65 6311 1111 Wendy Chew – chew_wendy@rafflesmedical.com who will make arrangements for overseas visitors Cost about £50
Japan		Warfarin/ Coumadin	Not at Japanese equivalent of G.P.
Thailand		Befarin/ Maforan/ Fargem	Coagulation laboratory at a hospital - walk in immediate appointments are available at Bangkok Hospital Pattaya, 301 M.6 Sukhumvit Road, Naklua, Banglamung, Chonburi 201, +66 038 250000 Cost about £40

*No appointment is needed. A fee of Euro 11 is charged. You will be given a note with the test number, which you present for the print out of the result in about 4 hours. If you don't speak French it would be a good idea to prepare a document for them stating your 'nom' (surname), 'prenom' (Christian name), 'adresse', and 'naissance' (date of birth).

**Try and call the laboratory first to see whether they use the same testing method you are used to, i.e. Coaguchek as opposed to venous testing. If you look on the homepage www.roche.at you should be able to find information about which doctors use Coagucheks.

“Do I have to pay for my INR if I have a European Health Insurance Card (formerly E111)? “is another question. I have been advised by the Department for Overseas

Health, which is part of the Department for Work and Pensions (0191 218 1999) that the EHIC covers your INR, but only at a state institution, not at a private clinic. However the EHIC is really only available for emergency medical treatment. You should also ensure you take out adequate travel insurance, which will mean paying an extra premium, as you will have to declare you are taking Warfarin. One company, which I have found very helpful in this respect, is Able2Travel (0845 839 9345). Another stumbling block while abroad is that the name 'Warfarin' meets blank looks. Some countries use it, while others may use a different drug with a similar effect. I recall suggesting to one caller that he tried 'Coumarin.' On another occasion, while over in Germany myself, I was trying to explain to a German friend about Warfarin and told her I was on 'Rattengift' ('rat poison' in German), to see whether that helped!

Dietary changes while abroad can cause your INR to fluctuate. While at home most people should be able to follow a consistent diet, which is what is recommended if you are on Warfarin, but this isn't always as easy abroad. In Germany, for example, a lot of restaurants serve salad instead of cooked vegetables with their main meals, which can affect your INR. Also in Europe some countries serve meats like venison with a sauce containing cranberries – definitely not allowed if you take Warfarin! Temperature changes can also cause an alteration in your INR, and some people find it so stressful travelling that this too can cause changes in their INRs.

Another problem is when to take your Warfarin while away if you are in a different time zone. The easiest solution is to recalculate the time to take your dose by adding/subtracting the time difference – for example if you normally take your tablets at 7pm at home, when you are in Western Europe, which is one hour ahead of us, you take your tablets at 8pm. One way which I find works for me is as follows: at home I normally take my Warfarin at 7pm just before eating my dinner. While over in Europe I adjust my time gradually back over a couple of days, and eventually take my tablets at 7pm local time just before dinner, which I find easier to remember. I then adjust the time the other way once I am home again. Obviously the calculations are a little more complicated if you are travelling further afield or through several time zones.

Useful tips before you go:

- Ensure you have enough tablets with you for the duration of your stay.
- If you self test ensure you have enough test strips and lances with you.

- Take some identification with you to prove you are taking Warfarin and the reason why – for example your yellow book, although I am aware that in some areas patients aren't given a yellow book. A Medipal® card (0845 603 4604) is another useful item to have. For those who travel frequently the information on it can be translated into other languages.
- Check by contacting the relevant hospital or clinic before you go if possible to see whether they use the same method of testing you are used to – e.g. Coaguchek as opposed to venous testing, as the results from the different methods can vary. This will obviously be far easier to do if you have been to the same place before or go over there on a regular basis.
- Take the contact details for your clinic or GP with you, as, while you may be able to have your INR abroad, if the country you are in doesn't use Warfarin, you will have to phone home to get an amended dose.
- If you are flying try to get up and walk around the plane at regular intervals. You could also exercise your legs while in your seat by moving your feet up and down every now and then. It could be worth asking your doctor to prescribe some compression stockings. Try and drink plenty of non-alcoholic drinks.
- If you are travelling long distance by coach or car try and stop every couple of hours to get out and stretch your legs. If you are not the driver you can do similar exercises to those above while sitting in your seat.

I would also like to thank several people I have contacted or whose websites I have searched on for their most useful information. These include:

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Esmeralda Wybrands, Trombosedienst, Holland

Gijs Vermeulen, Holland

Dominique Bolain, Roche,Belgium

Jacques Glineur, Belgium

Scott Berit, Norwegian Embassy, London

Dentalmalia, Crete

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