



Situational Safety: Getting In and Out of Cars

Warfarin patients and people not taking warfarin (Coumadin®) lead similar lives, with the notable exception that patients taking warfarin are at increased risk of prolonged bleeding or more frequent bruising during certain activities.

When traveling by car, both drivers and passengers need to get into and out of the vehicle. Since car doors are constructed from more than 50 pounds of steel and glass, they are potentially dangerous for warfarin patients as they get into or out of a car. Despite the presence of a thin foam lining, a car door is a large piece of exposed steel that comes to a point exactly where passengers enter and exit the vehicle. Serious bruising can occur if the point of the car door accidentally hits a person on the arm, shoulder, or head.

Furthermore, car doors opened on a hill can easily close themselves unexpectedly and cause a serious injury. The wind can also force a door closed unexpectedly on a warfarin patient, resulting in injury.

The hand, shoulder, head, torso, arm, and shin are common sites of car door injuries. Injuries to the soft tissue of the arm or torso can cause internal bleeding, swelling, and pain. Head or neck injuries resulting from car doors can cause major external bleeding and/or deep bruising. These injuries should be considered medical emergencies and patients should seek immediate medical attention.

Preventing Car Door Injuries

To prevent serious injury, patients are encouraged to place their hand on the open door corner to prevent it from swinging closed unexpectedly. However, the door is not a sturdy support and should not be solely relied upon for support. Patients on warfarin who are unsteady on their feet, or require help to get in and out of a car, may be at highest risk for car door accidents.

Any injury caused by a car door, whether it appears serious or not, should be reported to a healthcare professional. Although bruising and bleeding do not always occur, all car door injuries require immediate medical attention. Even patients on warfarin in their target INR range are at risk for prolonged bleeding from injury.¹

Visit: www.PTINR.com

1 Bristol-Myers Squibb Company. (2007). *Medication Guide for Coumadin Tablets and Coumadin for Injection* [Package Insert]. Princeton, NJ: Bristol-Myers Squibb Company.