

Information for people who are taking warfarin (Coumadin®)

Why am I taking warfarin?

Warfarin helps to reduce the risk of having a stroke by preventing blood clots from forming in your body. Preventing blood clots can make bleeding more likely. It is important to have blood tests to measure how quickly your blood clots. This blood test is called an 'INR' (**International Normalized Ratio**). The INR result is reported as a number. You will need regular INR tests, usually about every 1-3 weeks.

What is the right dose for me?

The goal INR is 2-3 for most people who take warfarin to prevent a stroke. When your INR is in this range, there is no need for a change in your dose. If your INR is less than 2, this means that you are not taking enough warfarin and your dose likely needs to be increased. If your INR is more than 3, this means that you might be taking too much warfarin and your dose likely needs to be decreased. Your doctor (or a member of his or her team) will adjust your dose. Ask questions and ensure you know your INR. It is useful to keep track of your INRs and warfarin doses on a calendar.

What are the side effects of warfarin?

The main side effect of warfarin is bleeding. You may notice a little bit of gum bleeding when you brush your teeth, or that you bleed a bit longer when you cut yourself but you are still able to stop the bleeding. This is expected. If you notice UNUSUAL bleeding, such as a nosebleed that won't stop with gentle pressure, blood in your urine, or bloody or black, tarry stools, etc., it is important to contact your doctor right away. Call your doctor immediately if you have a serious fall or hit your head.

What else do I need to know?

- Take your warfarin exactly as directed. Do not adjust your own dose or stop taking it without discussing it with your health care provider first.
- **Speak to your pharmacist before taking any new medicines, including over-the-counter medicines and natural supplements, as many medicines affect the way warfarin works.** Most people should not be taking warfarin with aspirin or other anti-inflammatory pain medications (such as naproxen, ibuprofen, etc). Speak to your healthcare provider if you are taking these at the same time as warfarin.
- Eat a well-balanced diet. Do not make any drastic changes to your diet without discussing them with your health care provider first.
- Be sure to tell all of your doctors, your dentist, pharmacist and all other health care providers that you are taking warfarin. Consider wearing a MedicAlert bracelet or carrying a wallet card that tells people that you are taking warfarin.

Information for people who are taking dabigatran (Pradaxa®)

Why am I taking dabigatran?

Dabigatran helps to reduce the risk of having a stroke by preventing blood clots from forming. It does not require blood tests to measure the clotting activity in your body.

What is the right dose for me?

The best dose for you will be determined by your doctor. It will depend on your age, whether you have had problems with bleeding in the past, what other medicines you are taking and whether you have any problems with your kidneys. Dabigatran is taken twice daily to prevent a stroke.

What is the main side effect of dabigatran?

The main side effect of dabigatran is bleeding. You may notice a little bit of gum bleeding when you brush your teeth, or that you bleed longer when you cut yourself, but you are still able to stop the bleeding. This is expected. If you notice UNUSUAL bleeding, such as a nosebleed that won't stop with gentle pressure, blood in your urine, or bloody or black, tarry stools, etc., it is important to contact your doctor right away. Call your doctor immediately if you have a serious fall or hit your head.

What else do I need to know?

- Take your dabigatran exactly as directed by your health care provider. Do not stop taking it without discussing it with your health care provider first.
- **Speak to your pharmacist before taking any new medicines, including over-the-counter medicines and natural supplements, as many medicines affect the way dabigatran works and may increase your risk of bleeding or having a stroke.** Most people should not be taking dabigatran with aspirin or other anti-inflammatory pain medications (such as naproxen, ibuprofen, etc). Speak to your healthcare provider if you are taking these at the same time as dabigatran.
- It is very important that you swallow the capsule(s) whole. Do not chew or open the capsule(s). Ensure that you store the capsules in their original container.
- Dabigatran may also cause heartburn. If you are also taking an antacid, it should be separated from dabigatran by at least two hours. Do not take them together.
- If you forget to take a dose of dabigatran, take it as soon as you remember. However, if it is less than 6 hours before your next dose, do not take the missed dose. Simply take your next dose when you are supposed to, and do not take a double dose to make up for the missed dose.
- Be sure to tell all of your doctors, your dentist, pharmacist and all other health care providers that you are taking dabigatran. Consider wearing a MedicAlert bracelet or carrying a wallet card that tells people that you are taking dabigatran.

Information for people who are taking rivaroxaban (Xarelto®)

Why am I taking rivaroxaban?

Rivaroxaban helps to reduce your risk of having a stroke by preventing blood clots from forming in your body. It does not require blood tests to measure your body's clotting activity.

What is the right dose for me?

There are two doses of rivaroxaban that are recommended for preventing a stroke in people with AFib. The best dose for you will be determined by your doctor. It will depend on things like whether you have had problems with bleeding in the past, what other medicines you are taking, and whether you have any problems with your kidneys. Rivaroxaban is taken once daily to prevent a stroke.

What is the main side effect of rivaroxaban?

Since it is used to prevent blood from clotting, the main side effect of rivaroxaban is bleeding. You may notice that you have a little bit of gum bleeding when you brush your teeth, or that you bleed a bit longer when you cut yourself, but you are still able to stop the bleeding. This is expected. If you notice UNUSUAL bleeding, such as a nosebleed that won't stop with gentle pressure, blood in your urine, or bloody or black, tarry stools, etc., it is important to contact your doctor right away. Call your doctor immediately if you have a serious fall or hit your head.

What else do I need to know?

- Take your rivaroxaban exactly as directed by your health care provider. Do not stop taking it without discussing it with your health care provider first.
- **Speak to your pharmacist before taking any new medicines, including over-the-counter medicines and natural supplements, as many medicines affect the way rivaroxaban works and may increase your risk of bleeding or having a stroke.** Most people should not be taking rivaroxaban with aspirin or other anti-inflammatory pain medications (such as naproxen, ibuprofen, etc). Speak to your healthcare provider if you are taking these at the same time as rivaroxaban.
- Rivaroxaban in a dose of 15mg or 20mg daily should be taken with food.
- If you miss a dose, take it as soon as possible and continue with your regular schedule. If it is almost time for your next dose, skip the missed dose and continue with your regular schedule. Do not take a double dose to make up for the missed one.
- Be sure to tell all of your doctors, your dentist, pharmacist, and all other health care providers that you are taking rivaroxaban. Consider wearing a MedicAlert bracelet or carrying a wallet card that tells people that you are taking rivaroxaban.

Information for people who are taking apixaban (Eliquis®)

Why am I taking apixaban?

Apixaban helps to reduce the risk of having a stroke by preventing blood clots from forming. It does not require blood tests to measure the clotting activity in your body.

What is the right dose for me?

The best dose for you will be determined by your doctor. It will depend on your age and weight, whether you have had problems with bleeding in the past, what other medicines you are taking and whether you have any problems with your kidneys. Apixaban is taken twice daily to prevent a stroke.

What is the main side effect of apixaban?

The main side effect of apixaban is bleeding. You may notice a little bit of gum bleeding when you brush your teeth, or that you bleed longer when you cut yourself, but you are still able to stop the bleeding. This is expected. If you notice UNUSUAL bleeding, such as a nosebleed that won't stop with gentle pressure, blood in your urine, or bloody or black, tarry stools, etc., it is important to contact your doctor right away. Call your doctor immediately if you have a serious fall or hit your head.

What else do I need to know?

- Take your apixaban exactly as directed by your health care provider. Do not stop taking it without discussing it with your health care provider first.
- **Speak to your pharmacist before taking any new medicines, including over-the-counter medicines and natural supplements, as many medicines affect the way apixaban works and may increase your risk of bleeding or having a stroke.** Most people should not be taking apixaban with aspirin or other anti-inflammatory pain medications (such as naproxen, ibuprofen, etc). Speak to your healthcare provider if you are taking these at the same time as apixaban.
- If you forget to take a dose of apixaban, take it as soon as you remember. However, if it is less than 6 hours before your next dose, do not take the missed dose. Simply take your next dose when you are supposed to, and do not take a double dose to make up for the missed dose.
- Be sure to tell all of your doctors, your dentist, pharmacist and all other health care providers that you are taking apixaban. Consider wearing a MedicAlert bracelet or carrying a wallet card that tells people that you are taking apixaban.