

ORAL ANTICOAGULANTS

Apixaban (Eliquis[®]) for Atrial Fibrillation

Patient Information Leaflet

What Are Anticoagulants And What Do They Do?

This information leaflet has been given to you because you are starting to take a medicine known as an anticoagulant,

Anticoagulants are medicines that are prescribed specifically to prevent or treat thrombosis. **Thrombosis** is a medical word for the formation of a clot inside a blood vessel. These drugs also reduce the risk of people with atrial fibrillation, a heart condition, from having a stroke.

Warfarin is the most commonly prescribed anticoagulant in the UK; however there are newer oral anticoagulants such as Apixaban which is now being given to you.

Atrial Fibrillation And Strokes

When the upper chambers of the heart, the atria, do not pump blood properly, as happens in atrial fibrillation, there is a risk of blood clots forming.

These clots may move into the lower chambers of the heart, the ventricles, and be pumped into the main blood circulation.

Clots in the main circulation can block arteries in the brain causing a stroke. A stroke occurs because the blockage stops fresh blood delivering oxygen to parts of the brain.

When you have atrial fibrillation your risk of a stroke depends on a number of factors, including your age and whether you have high blood pressure, heart failure, diabetes and whether or not you have had strokes or mini strokes (transient ischemic attacks, TIAs) in the past.

Helping To Reduce Your Stroke Risk

Many people with atrial fibrillation can reduce their stroke risk by regularly taking an anticoagulant prescribed by their doctor.

Anticoagulants change the way your blood clots and try to reduce the chance of a harmful clot forming in your heart and travelling to your brain, where it can cause a stroke.

Some people call anticoagulants “blood thinners” but your blood will not actually be any thinner. An anticoagulant changes how the blood cells stick together to form clots so if you cut yourself, you will bleed for longer but the bleeding will still stop.

How To Take Your Apixaban

Apixaban comes in two strengths; which one you need to take will have been decided by your doctor. This will depend on several factors including your age, other medical conditions and other drugs you are taking.

Usually you need to take one tablet twice a day with or without food. Swallow the tablet whole with some water. Never chew or bite into the tablet.

If You Miss A Dose

Try to take your tablet at roughly the same time each day.

If you do forget to take a tablet, take it as soon as you remember and continue taking your tablets twice a day as before

Never take a double dose to make up for having missed one.

If You Accidentally Take An Extra Dose

If you take more tablets than you should, let your doctor know. Your doctor may wish to do a blood test to assess your risk of bleeding.

How Long Will I Have To Take This Medication?

You should carry on taking your Apixaban every day unless your doctor tells you to stop. You may need to take it for the rest of your life and so getting into a routine will help make it part of your daily life. It's a good idea to put a reminder somewhere where you will see it such as the bathroom cabinet, door of the fridge or set up a reminder on your mobile phone.

What Should I Be Aware Of?

As Apixaban is an anticoagulant that is meant to alter your blood's ability to clot, a common side effect is an increased risk of bleeding either external (visible blood loss) or internal (bleeding inside the body)

Symptoms of external bleeding include

- Unusual bruising, nosebleeds, bleeding of the gums or cuts that take a long time to stop bleeding
- Menstrual flow or vaginal bleeding that is heavier than normal
- Pink or brown urine, red or black stools

Symptoms of internal bleeding include

- Unexplained dizziness or weakness
- Swelling or discomfort
- Sudden, severe headache
- Coughing up blood, or vomiting blood or something that looks like coffee grounds

If you have any symptoms of bleeding tell your doctor, out of hours service or A&E department urgently so that you can be monitored and have your treatment re-assessed as unlike warfarin there is currently no way to reverse the effects of Apixaban and so stop the bleeding.

If you cut yourself apply firm pressure to the site for at least five minutes using a clean, dry dressing.

Seek immediate medical attention if you

- are involved in a major accident
- suffer a significant blow to the head
- are unable to stop bleeding

Who Should I Tell About Taking This Medicine?

Let other healthcare professionals know you are taking Apixaban

Make sure that you carry the alert card, given with the medicine, at all times. If you lose it ask your healthcare team for a replacement straightaway.

Tell your doctor

- Tell any doctor treating you that you take Apixaban before receiving any treatment of other medicine.
- Let your doctor know if your lifestyle changes, for example if you change your alcohol consumption or if your weight drops below 50 kg
 - If you have an operation planned, make sure your surgeon knows you are taking this drug. You may need to stop taking Apixaban temporarily to reduce your risk of bleeding during and shortly after the operation but your doctor or surgeon will advise you what to do, follow their advice carefully.

Tell your dentist

Most dentists are happy to treat patients taking anticoagulants. If your dentist knows you are taking Apixaban then they will be prepared in case there is any bleeding when they are treating you. You may be advised to stop your Apixaban for certain procedures but your dentist will advise you on this

Tell your Pharmacist

Tell your Pharmacist you are taking Apixaban. They will be able to advise you about which medicines can be taken with anticoagulants, this is important whether the medicines you get from them are purchased over the counter or provided on prescription.

What About Pregnancy?

Oral anticoagulants can be dangerous in pregnancy; they affect the development of the baby. If anticoagulation is needed during pregnancy alternatives to Apixaban may be used.

If you are planning on becoming pregnant or suspect you have become pregnant you must tell your doctor as soon as possible so you can be given proper support and advice.

Will I Be Monitored During Treatment with Apixaban

Unlike some oral anticoagulants (such as warfarin) no regular blood tests are required. The blood tests used to monitor warfarin do not help monitor Apixaban. However it is important you attend regular follow up appointments with your doctor to assess and manage your condition and monitor your treatment with Apixaban.

Do I Need To Avoid Any Foods When Taking Apixaban

No. Apixaban is not known to be affected by any foods

Can I Drink Alcohol While Taking Apixaban

Apixaban does not interact with alcohol. However you should always monitor your drinking and stay within the recommended guidelines.

Should I Expect Any Side Effects?

As with all medicines, some patients may experience unwanted effects when taking a medicine. Because of the way Apixaban works most of these unwanted effects relate to bruising and bleeding. The more common unwanted effects of Apixaban are:

- Nosebleeds
- Bleeding from the stomach or bowel
- Stomach ache
- Frequent loose or liquid bowel movements
- Indigestion
- Feeling sick

Can I Take Other Medicines

You should not take any other medicines on your own without checking with your doctor or pharmacist. Check before you start any medicine including medicines such as painkillers, or cough or cold remedies. Because Apixaban is a relatively new medicine we may not be aware of all the affects other medicines can have on it.

In Conclusion

Anticoagulants have been prescribed for your present problem and must be taken as directed by your doctor. NEVER share this medication or any other prescribed medicine with anyone.

Keep away from children - Keep all medicines out of the reach of any child

Keep your medicines in the original packaging so there is less chance of taking the wrong medicine

If your doctor tells you to stop taking your Apixaban, do as directed, if there are any remaining tablets return them to a pharmacy so they can be disposed of safely.

If any of the information in this leaflet worries you or if you would like more details please ask your doctor or pharmacist but do not stop taking your medication unless you are bleeding or otherwise ill as described in the leaflet.

If you would like this leaflet in a different format, for example, in large print, or on audiotape, or for people with learning disabilities, please contact:

Patient and Customer Services, Poplar Suite, Stepping Hill Hospital. Tel: 0161 419 5678.

Email: PCS@stockport.nhs.uk. Or

Medicines Management, Stockport Clinical Commissioning Group Tel 0161 249 4232

A free interpreting service is available, if you need help with this booklet/ leaflet. Please telephone Stockport Interpreting Unit on 0161 477 9000. Email: eds.admin@stockport.gov.uk

如果你需要他人為你解釋這小冊子/單張的內容，我們可以提供免費的傳譯服務，請致電 0161 477 9000 史托波特傳譯部。

W przypadku gdybyś potrzebował pomocy odnośnie tej broszurki/ulotki, dostępne są usługi tłumaczeniowe. Prosimy dzwonić do Interpreting Unit pod numer 0161 477 9000.

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