

## Treatment with Apixaban

### *Eliquis*

*This handout explains the medicine apixaban, a drug that helps prevent blood clots.*

### **What is apixaban?**

Apixaban (brand name Eliquis) is an *anticoagulant* medicine. “Anti” means against, and “coagulant” refers to blood clotting. An anticoagulant helps keep clots from forming in your blood.

Apixaban is sometimes called a “blood-thinner,” but it does not thin your blood. It works by blocking the part of your blood that normally forms clots.

### **Why am I taking apixaban?**

Your doctor has prescribed apixaban to keep harmful blood clots from forming. Blood clots can occur in people who have a heart condition called *atrial fibrillation*.

In atrial fibrillation, part of the heart does not beat the way it should. This can make blood clots form within the heart. Parts of these clots can break off and travel to the brain.

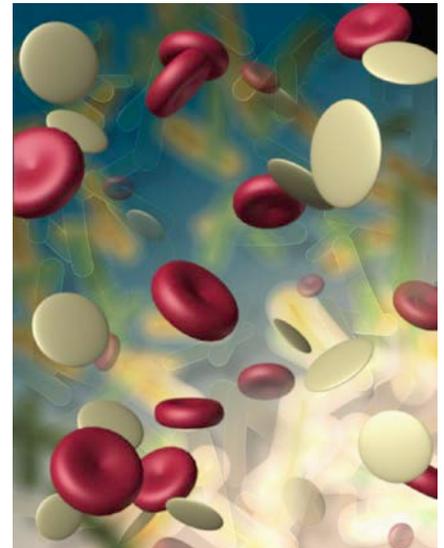
A blood clot in the brain can cause a stroke. Apixaban lowers the chance of clots forming and causing a stroke.

### **How does it work?**

Many things must happen inside the body for a blood clot to form. Parts of the blood called *clotting factors* are involved in each step of this process.

Apixaban blocks the clotting factor called *factor Xa*. This keeps clots from forming.

Apixaban can help stop clots from forming and can keep clots from getting larger. But, it does not break up clots that already exist.



*Apixaban works by blocking part of the blood that normally forms clots.*

Apixaban (Eliquis) is a medicine that is used to lower the risk of stroke in people who have atrial fibrillation.

Your dose of Apixaban may depend on your age, weight, kidney function, and other medicines you are taking. **Your doctor will decide which dose is right for you.**

- Take apixaban at the same time each day, in the morning and at night.
- Take tablets with or without food.
- Do not stop taking apixaban unless your doctor tells you to.

## How long does it take for apixaban to work?

Apixaban begins to reduce blood clotting within a few hours after taking the first dose. If you stop taking apixaban, its effects on clotting begin to wear off within 24 hours for most people.

## How much apixaban should I take?

Apixaban comes in 5 mg and 2.5 mg tablets. The dose will depend on your age, weight, and how well your kidneys are working, as well as other medicines you take. Your doctor will decide which dose is right for you. Apixaban is taken two times a day.

Most people take one of these doses:

- 5 mg, two times a day

*Or*

- 2.5 mg, two times a day

## How should I take apixaban?

- Take apixaban exactly as prescribed by your doctor, and at the same time each day, in the morning and at night.
- You can take apixaban tablets with or without food.
- Do **not** chew the tablets. Swallow the tablet whole with a drink of water.
- Do **not** stop taking apixaban unless your doctor tells you to.

## What should I do if I miss a dose?

Try not to miss any doses of apixaban. If you do miss a dose:

- Take it as soon as you remember. Take your other daily dose at its usual time. Then, keep taking your usual dose of 1 tablet 2 times a day.
- Do **not** take 2 tablets at the same time to make up for a dose you missed.
- If you take too much apixaban, call your doctor **right away** or go to the nearest emergency room.

## Refills

Do **not** run out of apixaban. Refill your prescription before you run out. The clot-fighting effects of apixaban begin to wear off in about 24 hours.

## When to Call Your Doctor

**Call your doctor or go to the nearest emergency room right away if you have any of these symptoms:**

- Sudden weakness in an arm or leg
- Sudden numbness or tingling anywhere in your body
- Changes in your eyesight or not being able to see out of one or both eyes
- Suddenly having slurred speech or not being able to speak
- Dizziness or faintness
- New pain, swelling, redness, or heat in your arm, leg, or foot
- New shortness of breath or chest pain

*Apixaban does not require any routine blood testing.*

## Do I need to have my blood tested while taking apixaban?

You do **not** need to have routine blood testing to check the amount of apixaban in your body. But, the dose of apixaban is based on how well your kidneys are working. Because of this, your doctor may want you to have a blood test from time to time to check the health of your kidneys.

## What are the side effects of apixaban?

### Bleeding

The most common and serious side effect of apixaban is bleeding. Apixaban can cause bleeding that can sometimes lead to death.

Very minor bleeding may occur. This is normal, and it may cause any of these symptoms from time to time:

- Gums bleeding when you brush your teeth
- Nosebleeds
- Easy bruising
- More bleeding than normal from small cuts
- For women, longer or heavier menstrual bleeding

**Call your doctor or come to the hospital emergency room right away if you:**

- Have a serious fall or hit your head
- Have any of these symptoms of **major bleeding**:
  - Bleeding in your eyes
  - Red or dark brown urine

*The most serious and common side effect of apixaban is bleeding.*

- Red or black tarry stool
- Vomiting or coughing up blood
- Severe headache or stomachache
- Bruises that appear for no known reason
- Nosebleeds, bleeding gums, or unusual bleeding that keeps happening
- Any bleeding that does not stop or is very heavy

**No medicine can reverse the effects of apixaban if you start to bleed. Your doctor will treat you with blood transfusions and other methods.**

### **Does apixaban affect how other medicines work?**

You may have a higher risk of bleeding if you take apixaban while you are taking other medicines that also lower your body's ability to form clots. **If you are taking apixaban, do NOT take any of these medicines without first checking with your doctor or anticoagulation clinic:**

- Aspirin or products that contain aspirin, such as Excedrin, Alka-Seltzer, Bayer, Bufferin, Nyquil, and Pepto-Bismol
- *Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs* (NSAIDs) such as ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil, and others), celecoxib (Celebrex), diclofenac (Cataflam, Voltaren), indomethacin (Indocin), ketoprofen (Actron, Orudis), meloxicam (Mobic), nabumetone (Relafen), naproxen (Aleve, Naprosyn, and others), piroxicam (Feldene), and others
- Warfarin (Coumadin)
- Any medicine that contains heparin
- Clopidogrel (Plavix), prasugrel (Effient), ticagrelor (Brilinta)
- Dabigatran (Pradaxa), rivaroxaban (Xarelto)

### **Other drugs may also affect how apixaban works in your body.**

It is very important to tell your doctor or anticoagulation clinic whenever you start or stop any medicine. This includes medicines you can buy without a prescription, herbal products, and vitamins.

### **Is it safe to drink alcohol while taking apixaban?**

It is best to avoid alcohol while taking apixaban. This is because it can increase the risk of bleeding in your stomach and intestines.

If you do drink alcohol, do not have more than 1 drink a day, and no more than 2 drinks at a time every now and then. (1 drink = 1 beer, **or** 1 glass of wine, **or** 1 cocktail, **or** 1 shot.)

*Call your doctor or the anticoagulation clinic whenever you start or stop any prescription or over-the-counter medicine, herbal product, or vitamin supplement.*

*Drug interactions with apixaban can increase your risk of bleeding.*

*Taking apixaban does not require you to avoid eating certain foods. It is best to avoid drinking alcohol while taking apixaban. If you do drink, see the guidelines on page 4.*

*Remember to tell all your health care providers that you are taking apixaban. If you must stop apixaban for any reason, tell the doctor who prescribed apixaban for you.*

## **Do I need to avoid eating certain foods while taking apixaban?**

You can eat all types of foods while you are taking apixaban. There are no eating restrictions.

## **Should I limit activities while taking apixaban?**

Since apixaban increases your risk of bleeding:

- Avoid activities that could cause an injury. It is usually safe to walk, jog, swim, and work in the garden.
- Tell your doctor or anticoagulation clinic pharmacist or nurse what your current activities are. They will tell you if it is safe to keep doing these while taking apixaban.

## **What if I get sick?**

Call your doctor or anticoagulation clinic if you get sick and cannot take your apixaban. See “What should I do if I miss a dose?” on page 2.

## **Who should I tell I am taking apixaban?**

It is very important to tell **all** your health care providers that you are taking apixaban. This includes your doctors, dentist, and all pharmacists where you have prescriptions filled. Being on apixaban may affect how they care for you in certain medical situations.

Carry a wallet card that says you take apixaban. Consider wearing a medical alert bracelet or necklace that will tell emergency health care providers that you take apixaban.

## **Are there any times I should stop taking apixaban?**

- Your doctor may tell you to stop taking apixaban for 1 or more days before medical or dental procedures, including surgery.
- You **must** stop taking apixaban before any procedure that requires you to have a tube called a *catheter* placed in your back for pain medicine and anesthesia. This is called an *epidural* catheter.
- If you need to stop taking apixaban for any reason, call the doctor who prescribed it for you. Find out when you should stop taking it. This doctor will also tell you when to start taking apixaban again after your surgery or procedure.

## **What about pregnancy?**

Apixaban has not been studied in pregnant women. If you become pregnant or plan to become pregnant while taking apixaban, call your doctor **right away** to talk about the benefits and risks of taking apixaban while you are pregnant.

## **Questions?**

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns.

Anticoagulation Clinic:  
206-598-4874