

# Treatment with Apixaban

*Eliquis*

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

## What is apixaban?

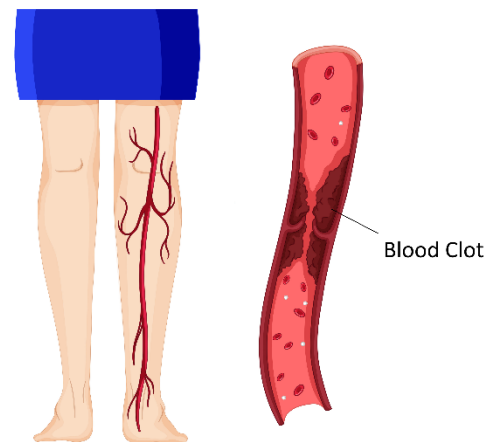
Apixaban (brand name Eliquis) is an *anticoagulant* medicine. “Anti” means against, and “coagulant” refers to blood clotting. An anticoagulant helps keep clots from forming in your blood.

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

## Why am I taking it?

Your doctor has prescribed apixaban to treat or prevent blood clots. You may have one of these conditions that can cause clots:

- **Atrial fibrillation:** If part of the heart does not beat the way it should, blood clots can form within the heart. Parts of these clots can break off, travel to the brain, and cause a stroke.
- **Surgery:** Blood clots may form after surgery, including surgery to replace a hip or knee.
- **Deep vein thrombosis (DVT) and pulmonary embolism (PE):** A DVT is a blood clot that forms in a vein, usually in the legs. A PE is a clot that is in the lung.



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

## How does apixaban work?

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

Apixaban blocks one of the clotting factors, *factor Xa*. Apixaban can help stop clots from forming and can keep clots from getting larger, but it does not break up clots that already exist.

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

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



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## How much apixaban should I take?

Apixaban comes in 5 mg and 2.5 mg tablets. Your doctor will decide which dose is right for you. Your dose depends on your age, weight, your condition, how well your kidneys are working, and other medicines you take.

These are the usual doses for the 3 common conditions:

<b>Atrial fibrillation</b>	5 mg, 2 times a day
<b>After surgery</b>	2.5 mg, 2 times a day (First dose taken 12 to 24 hours after surgery.)
<b>DVT and PE</b>	Starting dose: 10 mg, 2 times a day, for 7 days After 7 days: 5 mg, 2 times a day (Taken for a total of at least 3 months.)

## How should I take apixaban?

Take apixaban exactly as your doctor prescribed. Do **not** stop taking apixaban unless your doctor tells you to.

- Take it at the same time each day, in the morning and at night.
- Take the tablets with or without food.
- Do **not** chew the tablets. Swallow the tablet whole with a drink of water.
- If you cannot swallow apixaban tablets whole, you may crush and mix them in water or juice. Drink the mixture right away after mixing.

## What if I miss a dose?

**Try not to miss any doses of apixaban.** If you do miss a dose, follow these instructions:

- If your next dose is 6 or more hours away, take the missed dose as soon as you remember.
- If your next dose is less than 6 hours away, skip the missed dose.
- After that, keep taking your usual dose of 1 tablet 2 times a day.

**Never take 2 doses of apixaban at the same time. If you take too much apixaban, call your doctor right away or go to the nearest emergency room.**

## How do I store apixaban?

- Store apixaban at room temperature, in a dry place. Do **not** keep it in a bathroom.
- Keep all your medicines in a safe place, out of the reach of children and pets.

## What are the side effects of apixaban?

Light bleeding is normal with apixaban. Heavy bleeding is more serious.

### Light Bleeding

You may have 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

### Heavy Bleeding

Apixaban can also cause severe bleeding that could lead to death (see “When to Call Your Doctor” below). **If you start to bleed, there is a medicine that can reverse the effects of apixaban. Call your doctor or go to the emergency room.** Your doctor may also treat you with blood transfusions and other methods.

## Do I need refills?

Do **not** run out of apixaban. Refill your prescription **before** you run out. The clot-fighting effects begin to wear off if you miss 2 or more doses in a row. **This can be very dangerous.**

## What do I do with extra apixaban?

Put unused or expired medicines in the trash. Do **not** flush them down a toilet or pour them down a drain, unless you are told to do so. Ask your pharmacist about the best way to throw away extra medicines.

## 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 eyesight or not being able to see out of one or both eyes
- Suddenly having slurred speech or not being able to speak
- Feeling dizzy or faint
- New pain, swelling, redness, or heat in your arm, leg, or foot
- New shortness of breath or chest pain
- You have a serious fall or you hit your head
- Any bleeding that does not stop or is very heavy

- Other signs of **serious bleeding**:
  - Bleeding in your eyes
  - Red or dark brown urine
  - Red or black tarry stool
  - Vomiting or coughing up blood (vomit may look like coffee grounds)
  - Nosebleeds, bleeding gums, or unusual bleeding that keeps happening

## Does apixaban affect how other medicines work?

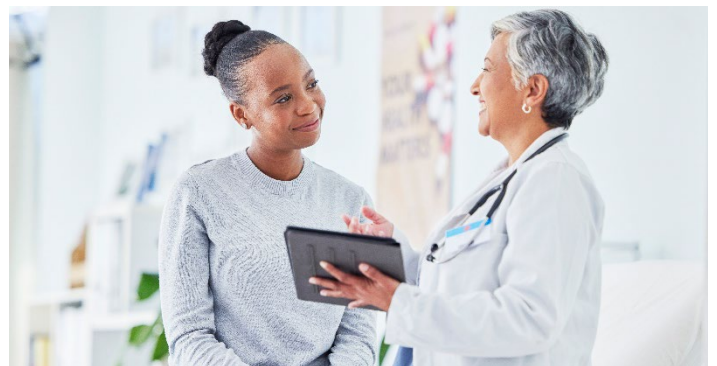
You may have a higher risk of bleeding if you take apixaban while you are taking other medicines that also lower your body's clotting ability. If you are taking apixaban, **do NOT take any of these medicines without first checking with your doctor or anticoagulation clinic**:

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

**Other drugs may also affect how apixaban works in your body.** You must tell your doctor or anticoagulation clinic whenever you start or stop any medicine. This includes medicines you buy without a prescription, herbal products, vitamins, and minerals.

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

- Tell **all** your healthcare providers that you are taking apixaban. This includes your doctors, dentist, and pharmacists where you have prescriptions filled. Being on apixaban may affect how they care for you in certain situations.
- Carry a wallet card that says you take apixaban. You may also want to wear a medical alert bracelet or necklace that will tell emergency healthcare providers that you take apixaban.



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

## 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 uses an *epidural catheter*. This is a tube that is placed in your back for pain medicine and anesthesia.

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.



***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.***

## Questions You May Have While Taking Apixaban

### ***Q. Can I drink alcohol?***

**It is best to avoid alcohol while taking apixaban.** Alcohol 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 do not drink more than 2 drinks at a time every now and then. One drink = 1 beer (12 oz.), **or** 1 glass of wine (4 oz.), **or** 1 cocktail (2 oz.), **or** 1 shot (1½ oz.).

### ***Q. Do I need to avoid any foods?***

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

### ***Q. Should I limit activities?***

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.

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

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

**Q. Do I need to have regular blood tests?**

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. You may also need yearly blood counts and liver function tests.

**Q. Can I take apixaban if I am pregnant?**

We do not know how apixaban affects pregnancy or unborn babies. 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 healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

**Anticoagulation Clinics:**

**UWMC – Montlake:**  
206.598.4874

**UWMC – Northwest:**  
206.668.1282

**Harborview Medical Center:**  
206.744.2976