

Treatment with Rivaroxaban

Xarelto

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

What is rivaroxaban?

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

Although rivaroxaban is sometimes called a “blood thinner,” it does not 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 rivaroxaban 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.



Not being able to walk right after hip or knee replacement surgery raises your risk of getting a blood clot in your legs.

How does rivaroxaban 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.

Rivaroxaban blocks a clotting factor called *factor Xa*. Rivaroxaban can help stop clots from forming and can keep clots from getting larger, but it does not break up clots you already have.

How long does it take for rivaroxaban to work?

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



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How much rivaroxaban should I take?

Rivaroxaban comes in 10 mg, 15 mg, and 20 mg tablets. Your doctor will decide which dose is right for you. Your dose will depend on how well your kidneys are working, and other medicines you take.

These are the usual doses for the 3 common conditions:

- **Atrial fibrillation:** 15 mg or 20 mg, once a day, **with your evening meal**
- **After surgery:** 10 mg, once a day, with or without food
(First dose taken 6 to 10 hours after surgery. Medicine is taken for up to 1 month.)
- **DVT and PE:** Starting dose: 15 mg, 2 times a day, **with food**, for 21 days
After 21 days: 20 mg, once a day, **with food** (Taken for at least 2 more months.)

How should I take rivaroxaban?

Take rivaroxaban exactly as prescribed by your doctor, and at the same time each day:

- You can take the 10 mg tablets with or without food.
- You **must** take the 15 mg and 20 mg tablets with food.
- If you are taking rivaroxaban to prevent stroke in atrial fibrillation, take your dose with your evening meal.
- Rivaroxaban tablets can be crushed, if needed.
- Do **not** stop taking rivaroxaban unless your doctor tells you to.

How should I store rivaroxaban?

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

What if I miss a dose?

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

- If you take rivaroxaban once a day and remember the same day, take it as soon as you remember.
- If you take rivaroxaban 2 times a day, you may take two 15 mg tablets at the same time, but **only** on the day you missed your dose. Go back to taking one 15 mg tablet twice a day the next day.
- If you miss a full day of your doses, call your anticoagulation clinic or your doctor. If you cannot reach them, skip your missed doses and take your usual dose the next day at the normal time.

If you take too much rivaroxaban, call your doctor right away or go to the nearest emergency room.

Do I need refills?

Do **not** run out of rivaroxaban. Refill your prescription **before** you run out. The clot-fighting effects begin to wear off in about 24 hours. **This can be very dangerous.**

What are the side effects of rivaroxaban?

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

Light Bleeding

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

Heavy Bleeding

Rivaroxaban 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 rivaroxaban.** Your doctor may also treat you with blood transfusions and other methods.

Other Side Effects

There are other common side effects of rivaroxaban. Talk with your healthcare provider if these symptoms are bothering you:

- Itching
- “Pins and needles” or a tingling feeling
- Blisters
- Increased fluid drainage from your surgery site (if you are taking rivaroxaban to prevent blood clots after surgery)

When to Call Your Doctor

Call your doctor or go to the nearest emergency room right away if you have:

- 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
- Dizziness or faintness
- New pain, swelling, redness, or heat in your arm, leg, or foot
- New shortness of breath or chest pain

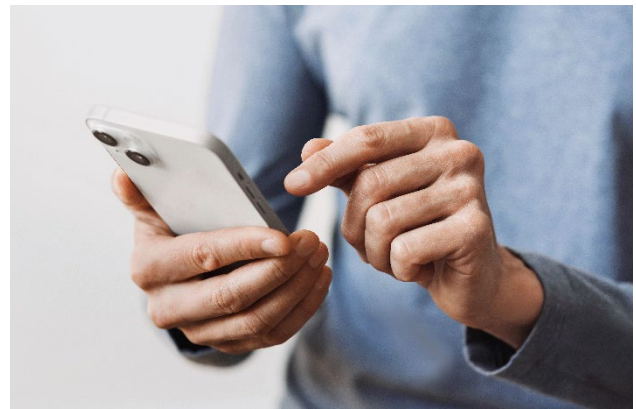
- A serious fall or hit your head
- Any bleeding that does not stop or is very heavy
- Signs of **serious bleeding**:
 - Bleeding in your eyes
 - Red or dark brown urine
 - Red or black tarry stool
 - Vomiting or coughing up blood (vomit may look like coffee grounds)
 - Severe headache or stomachache
 - Bruises that appear for no known reason
 - Nosebleeds, bleeding gums, or strange bleeding that keeps happening

Does rivaroxaban affect how other medicines work?

You may have a higher risk of bleeding if you take rivaroxaban while you are taking other medicines that also lower your body's clotting ability. If you are taking rivaroxaban, **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, and 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 others), and piroxicam (Feldene)
- Warfarin (Coumadin)
- Medicines that contain heparin
- Clopidogrel (Plavix), prasugrel (Effient), ticagrelor (Brilinta)
- Dabigatran (Pradaxa), apixaban (Eliquis), edoxaban (Savaysa), betrixaban (Bevyxxa)

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



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 rivaroxaban can increase your risk of bleeding.

Who should I tell I am taking rivaroxaban?

Tell **all** your healthcare providers that you are taking rivaroxaban. This includes your doctors, dentist, and all pharmacists where you have prescriptions filled. Being on rivaroxaban may affect how they care for you in certain medical situations.

Carry a wallet card that says you take rivaroxaban. You may want to wear a medical alert bracelet or necklace that will tell emergency healthcare providers that you take rivaroxaban.

Are there any times I should stop taking rivaroxaban?

- Your doctor may tell you to stop taking rivaroxaban for 1 or more days before medical or dental procedures, including surgery.
- You **must** stop taking rivaroxaban 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 rivaroxaban 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 rivaroxaban again after your surgery or procedure.



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

Questions You May Have While Taking Rivaroxaban

Q. Can I drink alcohol?

It is best to avoid alcohol while taking rivaroxaban. 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 rivaroxaban. There are no eating restrictions.

Q. Should I limit activities?

Since rivaroxaban 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 rivaroxaban.

Q. What if I get sick?

Call your doctor or anticoagulation clinic if you get sick and cannot take your rivaroxaban. 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 rivaroxaban in your body. But, the dose of rivaroxaban 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 rivaroxaban if I am pregnant?

We do not know how rivaroxaban affects pregnancy or unborn babies. If you become pregnant or plan to become pregnant while taking rivaroxaban, call your doctor **right away** to talk about the benefits and risks of taking rivaroxaban 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