

Patient information

Apixaban

How does it work?

Apixaban is a type of medicine known as an anticoagulant - or blood thinner.

It makes your blood flow through your veins more easily. This means your blood will be less likely to make a blood clot.

Why has my doctor given me apixaban and what are the benefits?

I am taking apixaban for:

- ☐ A blood clot in the lungs (known as pulmonary embolism or PE)
- ☐ A blood clot in a vein, often in the leg (known as deep vein thrombosis or DVT)
- ☐ An irregular heartbeat (known as atrial fibrillation or AF)
- ☐ Other:

Apixaban is used to prevent growth of a clot that has developed.

It's also used to lower the risk of blood clots if you're at high risk of having them in the future. People who are at high risk include those who have atrial fibrillation, a condition which is associated with clots in the brain (stroke).

Apixaban is one of the anticoagulant treatment options available for preventing clots. It is part of the direct oral anticoagulant group of medicines, also known as DOACs.

How should I take my apixaban?

Always follow the instructions on the label, which will usually mean you have to take your apixaban twice a day. If you do not take apixaban regularly it will not be effective and your risk of a clot forming or getting worse will increase.

Apixaban can be taken with or without food, preferably with water. Try to take it at the same time each day.

If you have had a new DVT or PE, this will usually mean you have to take apixaban at the higher dose of 10mg twice daily (morning and night) for the first seven days then reduce to 5mg twice daily thereafter until the treatment course ends.

I am taking apixaban:

☐

Long-term or lifelong

☐

Short term only – this is usually three to six months. Please discuss how long your treatment will last with your doctor.

My dose is:

What if I can't swallow my apixaban?

If you can't swallow your apixaban, ask your pharmacist for a tablet crusher. Apixaban tablets can be crushed and mixed with water or apple juice immediately before taking it.

Do not stop taking this medicine unless your doctor tells you to.

You should inform your doctor or dentist you are taking apixaban before any surgery or treatment is scheduled. It may need to be stopped for one or more days before any planned surgery, dental or medical procedure but do not stop taking until asked to, as you may need to an alternative anticoagulant treatment instead.

What should I do if I miss a dose?

It is important not to skip doses or the medicine won't work.

If a dose is missed you should take apixaban immediately, take the next tablet at the usual time and then continue twice daily as normal. If you are not sure what to do or have missed more than one dose, ask your doctor, pharmacist or nurse.

If you have taken too many tablets all at once, you may have an increased risk of bleeding. Contact your doctor or local hospital emergency department (A&E) immediately. Show the doctor your pack of tablets.

What are the side effects of apixaban?

All medicines have side effects, but not everybody will experience these. As this medicine affects blood clotting, most side effects are related to signs such as bruising or bleeding.

Tell your doctor immediately if you experience any of the following side effects:

- Long or excessive bleeding – any bleeding you **Cannot** stop **Requires** medical assistance. If you experience a nose bleed that lasts than more than ten minutes, or a cut that lasts more than 30 minutes, please go to a walk-in centre.
- Blood in the urine or vomit.
- Passing black, tarry or blood stained stools.
- Exceptional weakness, tiredness or paleness.
- Dizziness or headaches.
- Unexplained swelling.

If you fall and injure yourself while taking apixaban, you should seek urgent medical attention, especially if you hit your head or are involved in a road traffic accident, due to the increased risk of bleeding.

If you knock yourself whilst taking apixaban you might find that you bruise more easily, this is normal, however large unexplained bruising is a sign of abnormal bleeding and requires medical assistance.

What are the risks of apixaban?

There are risks and benefits of taking all medicines, however, your doctor will discuss why there are more benefits than risks for you taking apixaban.

Can I take apixaban if I'm pregnant or breastfeeding?

You **should not** take apixaban if you are pregnant. If you are pregnant or if you are planning to have a baby, ask your doctor or pharmacist for advice before taking this medicine. If you get pregnant whilst taking apixaban, please contact your doctor straightaway.

If there is a chance you could get pregnant, use a reliable form of contraceptive whilst taking apixaban.

It is not recommended to take apixaban whilst breastfeeding. If you are breastfeeding or plan on breastfeeding, please speak to your doctor straightaway.

How should apixaban be stored?

Do not take your tablets if the expiry date has passed. The expiry date refers to the last day of that month. Keep the tablets in their original packaging and store them in a dry place below 25°C. Keep all medicines out of the sight and reach of children – it is best to lock them in a cupboard or medicine cabinet.

Apixaban may be re-dispensed into a compliance aid, such as a dosette box, if necessary.

Do I have to carry a card?

Yes, you will be given an alert card that you should carry with you at all times. This has important information to be given to medical professionals in an emergency.

Can I take other medicines/ alcohol while taking apixaban?

Apixaban has fewer potential interactions with other medicines compared with warfarin, and at present there are no known interactions with specific foods or alcohol.

There are some medicines which apixaban does interact with so you should inform your prescribing doctor of the names of all medicines you are taking (including prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins and herbal supplements).

Apixaban should not be taken with anti-inflammatories like ibuprofen, naproxen or aspirin. Sometimes your doctor will wish you to take apixaban with another medicine that may thin your blood such as low dose aspirin or clopidogrel. If you are taking one of these medicines please check with your doctor or anticoagulation service that it is to continue with the apixaban.

It is important you check with your doctor or pharmacist before you take any other medicines, including ones you buy, especially cold or flu remedies.

Are there any alternative treatments available?

If you have been prescribed apixaban it is the most appropriate treatment for you, however there are other treatment options. If you have any side effects or wish to discuss alternative treatments please speak to your doctor.

How does it differ from warfarin?

Warfarin is another type of anticoagulant that patients may be prescribed as an alternative if deemed appropriate, for example if you have a metallic heart valve. Warfarin requires regular blood test monitoring and may require regular dose changes. If you want to find out more about warfarin, please contact the anticoagulation clinic (contact details below).

What will happen if I decide not to have treatment?

If you decide not to take apixaban or any other anticoagulant you will not get any of the benefits. You must discuss this with your doctor as they need to know if you are not taking it and may be able to prescribe an alternative.

Who can I tell about my side effects?

You should discuss any side effects with a healthcare professional. In addition, please report any side effects to the MHRA via the yellow card scheme. Reports are confidential and help to improve the safety of medicines. Report side effects on the website (visit <https://yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk/> or search for yellow card scheme and on the yellow card app on the apple app store or google play store.

If you have any questions about apixaban please contact your pharmacist, doctor or nurse.

Feedback

Your feedback is important to us and helps us influence care in the future.

Following your discharge from hospital or attendance at your outpatient appointment you will receive a text asking if you would recommend our service to others. Please take the time to text back, you will not be charged for the text and can opt out at any point. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

Further information

This leaflet is not a substitute for any advice your doctor, nurse or pharmacist may give you. You can get more detailed information from the manufacturer's information leaflet.

If you want further information regarding the content of this leaflet please contact Haematology Liverpool (contact details below).

Medicines information patient Hotline
0151 529 3208

Haematology Liverpool
Royal Liverpool Hospital: Open 9am-5pm
0151 706 3397

Author: Anticoagulation Safety Group
Review date: August 2027

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