



# Rivaroxaban (Xarelto)

## What are Anticoagulants?

Anticoagulants are medicines that prevent the blood from clotting as quickly as normal. Some people call anticoagulants blood thinners. The blood is not actually made any thinner - it just takes longer to clot whilst you are taking anticoagulants

## What is Rivaroxaban (Xarelto®)?

Rivaroxaban is an anticoagulant medicine that helps to prevent blood from clotting. It does this by interfering with a substance in the body called Factor Xa which is involved in the development of blood clots. This medicine has been approved by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) and accepted by the Scottish Medicines Consortium (SMC) for prevention of blood clots in patients who have knee or hip replacement surgery, for the treatment of deep vein thrombosis (DVT) and the prevention of recurrent DVT, for prevention of stroke in patients with non-valvular atrial fibrillation and the treatment of pulmonary embolism (PE) and the prevention of recurrent DVT and PE. NICE has also approved Rivaroxaban for use with aspirin alone, or with aspirin plus Clopidogrel, for the treatment of acute coronary syndrome (ACS).

## Can anyone take Rivaroxaban?

**No**, not everyone can take Rivaroxaban. You should discuss the benefits and risks of taking this drug with your health care professional.

## How is Rivaroxaban different from Warfarin?

Both rivaroxaban and warfarin are anticoagulants. Rivaroxaban is a factor Xa inhibitor and warfarin is a vitamin K antagonist. This means that they work on different parts of the clotting system. Rivaroxaban is a fixed daily dose. With warfarin the dose may vary from day to day.

## Do I need to have regular blood tests with Rivaroxaban?

**No**, rivaroxaban does not need regular blood tests to monitor your clotting levels (INR test).

However you should have a blood test to monitor your kidney function before you start taking rivaroxaban and then once a year.

## What is the dose of Rivaroxaban?

Rivaroxaban is normally taken once a day. However for the treatment of deep vein thrombosis and pulmonary embolism the dose is twice a day for the first three weeks and then once a day thereafter. You should take the tablet at the same time each day with food.

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

Rivaroxaban has a shorter duration of action compared to warfarin. This means it does not stay in your body for as long as warfarin, so it is important to remember to take it every day. If you miss a dose take the missed dose as soon as you remember on that day. Take your next dose the following day and stay on your once-daily schedule. Do not take two tablets the next day to make up the missed dose.\* If you have trouble remembering to take your tablets speak to your doctor or nurse about the many aids that you can use to help you remember.

**\*Exceptions to this rule:** When you are taking two doses a day during the first three weeks of being treated for deep vein thrombosis and pulmonary embolism. If you miss the morning dose you can take it together with your dose in the evening.

## Do I need to follow a special diet for Rivaroxaban?

**No**, Rivaroxaban does not have any special dietary instructions or requirements.

However, foods such as grapefruit or grapefruit juice may affect the absorption of some drugs including anticoagulants.

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## Does Rivaroxaban have interactions with other medications?

**Yes**, there are some medications that may interact with Rivaroxaban, however, these are far fewer than with warfarin. Talk to your health care professional about any other medication that you are taking to see if it will interact before you start Rivaroxaban and always let them know when you start or stop other medications. Always tell the pharmacist that you are taking Rivaroxaban if you are buying over the counter medicines.

## What are the side effects of Rivaroxaban?

All medicines have the potential to cause side effects for some people. You should read the patient information leaflet that you will find in the box of Rivaroxaban. With all anticoagulants, the major side effect can be bleeding.

Tell your health care professional if you experience any of the following:

- Bloody black or tarry stools
- Blood in the urine
- Coughing up or vomiting blood or material that looks like coffee grounds
- Nose bleeds
- Bleeding from your gums
- Unusual or extensive bruising

## What if I need to have surgery or a procedure?

You should tell anyone who is treating you that you are taking Rivaroxaban. If you need surgery or a procedure, make sure that you tell the doctor or surgeon well before the surgery that you are using this medication. If you need to have an anesthetic for a medical procedure or surgery, you may need to stop using Rivaroxaban for a short time. The doctor will tell you if you need to stop taking it and when to do so and when to start taking it again.

**DO NOT STOP TAKING THIS MEDICATION WITHOUT FIRST TALKING TO YOUR DOCTOR**

## Is there a reversal agent for Rivaroxaban?

At the moment there is no reversal agent for Rivaroxaban. However Rivaroxaban has a shorter duration of action compared to warfarin. This means it does not stay in your body for as long as warfarin. If you have a bleeding problem or need to have surgery very quickly, the doctor will stop you taking Rivaroxaban and will stop the bleeding in other ways.

## Carrying a medical identification card

It is always advisable to carry some sort of identification, so that in the event of you being unable to, it will let others know that you are taking an anticoagulant. The manufacturer of the drug may provide an alert card. There are also a variety of items available to buy that tell people that you are taking an anticoagulant including: credit card size alert cards and medic alert bracelets and necklaces.



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