Intermountain® Healthcare

Rivaroxaban (Xarelto) *What you need to know and do*

What is rivaroxaban? Why do I need it?

Rivaroxaban (Xarelto) is a medication that helps prevent blood clots. It is prescribed for people with **atrial fibrillation (afib)** — an abnormal heart rhythm that can cause blood clots to form in the heart. If a blood clot moves from the heart to your brain, it can cause a stroke. By preventing these blood clots, rivaroxaban helps prevent a stroke.

People who have hip or knee replacement surgery also use rivaroxaban to prevent blood clots from forming in the legs. If a blood clot in the leg breaks loose and travels to the lungs, it can cause shortness of breath, chest pain, and even death.

How does rivaroxaban work?

Rivaroxaban is an **anticoagulant**. It blocks the action of a specific factor in your body that is needed to make clots. Anticoagulants are sometimes called "blood thinners," but they don't actually thin your blood. They also do not break up existing clots. Instead, anticoagulants such as rivaroxaban prevent new clots from forming. They can also keep existing clots from getting bigger, so your body can dissolve them over time.

When and how should I take it?

Take rivaroxaban once a day, **with your evening meal.** Do not stop taking rivaroxaban without talking to your doctor.

What should I do if I forget a dose?

If you forgot to take a dose of rivaroxaban, take it as soon as possible, once you remember. Then continue the following day with your next dose. **Do NOT double the dose** (do NOT take twice as much the next time).

Rivaroxaban helps to prevent blood clots.

Does rivaroxaban interact with other medications?

Rivaroxaban can interact with medications, sometimes by increasing your bleeding risk. **Always talk to your doctor or pharmacist before starting any new medication or herbal supplement.** Medications that interact with rivaroxaban include:

- aspirin
- carbamazepine (Tegretol)
- clopidogrel (Plavix)
- HIV protease inhibitors (ritonavir, lopinavir, or indinavir)
- medications that end with -azole (ketoconazole or itraconazole)
- NSAIDs (ibuprofen, naproxen, Motrin, Advil, Aleve, etc.)
- phenobarbital
- phenytoin (Dilantin)
- prasugrel (Effient)
- rifampin
- St. John's wort
- ticagrelor (Brilinta)

Other questions about rivaroxaban

- **Who should NOT take it?** Patients who are allergic to rivaroxaban, who have bleeding problems, or who have impaired kidney function should not take rivaroxaban. If you have any of these conditions and you are taking rivaroxaban, tell your doctor right away.

- **Is it safe in pregnancy?** Women should not take rivaroxaban during pregnancy. If you are pregnant, or plan to become pregnant, talk to your doctor before starting rivaroxaban.
- **Is it safe for nursing mothers?** It is not known if rivaroxaban gets excreted in breastmilk. If you are breastfeeding, talk to your doctor before starting rivaroxaban.
- **How does it compare to Coumadin (warfarin)?** Studies show that rivaroxaban works as well as warfarin in reducing the risk of blood clots with total hip or knee joint surgery and reducing the risk of blood clots from atrial fibrillation.
  - **Advantages.** Rivaroxaban has fewer medication interactions than warfarin; it doesn't interact with food, and it doesn't require frequent blood tests.
  - **Disadvantages.** Rivaroxaban is available only as the brand-name drug **Xarelto** — there is no generic option. Also, there is no antidote to reverse its action.

Does rivaroxaban have risks?

As with any medication, rivaroxaban poses some risks and side effects:

- **It can increase your risk of bleeding.** See "When should I get medical help" for more information.
- **It can cause stomach upset** — including ulcers and heartburn — as well as headache, diarrhea, fatigue, and dizziness. If rivaroxaban bothers your stomach, take it with food. If that doesn't help, talk to your doctor.
- **An increased risk of heart attack may exist** with rivaroxaban. Talk to your doctor to learn more.

How can I help prevent bleeding?

To help reduce the risk of bleeding with rivaroxaban:

- **Check with your doctor before doing any activity where you risk being hurt.** Examples include contact sports and work that puts you on a ladder or around sharp tools. When you're taking rivaroxaban, any major injury could cause serious bruising or bleeding.
- **Make sure your doctor or dentist knows you are on rivaroxaban, at least a week before any dental or surgical procedure.** You may need to stop taking it before having a procedure.

When should I get medical help?

Call the doctor or anticoagulation clinic if:

- You start, stop, or change the dose of any of the medications listed on page one
- You fall and hurt yourself, especially if you hit your head
- You see any of these **signs of increased bleeding:**
  - Bruising more than normal
  - Abnormal bleeding from your mouth, nose, or gums
  - Pink, red, or dark brown urine
  - Minor bleeding or bright red blood in your stool
  - Increased menstrual bleeding

Call 911 or go to the emergency room if you notice any of these:

- A very bad headache and stiff neck that comes on suddenly
- Bowel movements that are bloody, dark red, black, tarry, smelly, or loose
- Sudden dizziness, faintness, or weakness
- Sudden pain in a joint (like an ankle, knee, wrist, elbow, shoulder, or hip)
- Cloudy vision that comes on suddenly
- Coldness or numbness in your arm or leg
- Sudden chest pain
- Trouble talking or moving one side of your body

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