Intermountain® Healthcare

Apixaban (Eliquis): *What you need to know and do*

What is apixaban?

Apixaban (Eliquis) is a medication that helps to reduce the risk of blood clots. It's used to help prevent stroke in people with a certain type of atrial fibrillation.

Why do I need it?

Atrial fibrillation (also called **"a-fib"** for short) is 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. Apixaban helps prevent this by blocking the formation of blood clots.

Apixaban is intended for patients with **nonvalvular atrial fibrillation** — a type of a-fib that is not caused by heart valve disease.

How does apixaban work?

Apixaban is an **anticoagulant**. It blocks the action of a specific factor in your body required 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 apixaban 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 apixaban 2 times a day, with or without food.
- Take apixaban around the same time each day, for example at breakfast and dinner.
- Do not stop taking apixaban without talking to your doctor.

What should I do if I forget a dose?

If you miss a dose of apixaban, take it as soon as possible on the same day, and then continue with your twice-a-day dosing. **Do NOT take more than one dose of apixaban at a time** to make up for the missed dose.

Apixaban helps prevent blood clots.

Does apixaban interact with other medications?

Apixaban interacts with some medications, sometimes by increasing your bleeding risk. **Always talk to your doctor or pharmacist before starting any new medication or herbal supplement.** Medications that may interact with apixaban include:

- Aspirin or products containing aspirin
- Carbamazepine (Tegretol)
- Clarithromycin (Biaxin)
- Clopidogrel (Plavix)
- Protease inhibitors/ antivirals (such as boceprevir, indinavir, lopinavir, ritonavir, or telaprevir)
- Anti-fungal medications that end with -azole (such as ketoconazole or itraconazole)
- NSAIDs (ibuprofen, naproxen, Motrin, Advil, Aleve, etc.)
- Phenytoin (Dilantin)
- Prasugrel (Effient)
- Rifampin (Rifadin)
- St. John's wort
- Ticagrelor (Brilinta)

Other questions about apixaban

- **Who should NOT take it?** People who are allergic to apixaban, who have heart valve disease, or who have bleeding problems shouldn't take apixaban. If you have any of these conditions and you are taking apixaban, tell your doctor right away.
- **What if I have kidney disease?** People with impaired kidneys can safely take a lower dose of apixaban. If you have kidney disease (also called renal disease), tell your doctor. Your doctor can make sure you're taking the correct dose.
- **Is it safe in pregnancy?** Women should not take apixaban during pregnancy. If you're pregnant or you plan to become pregnant, talk to your doctor before starting apixaban.
- **Is it safe for nursing mothers?** Do not take apixaban if you are breastfeeding. It is not known whether apixaban is safe in this situation. If you are breastfeeding, talk to your doctor.
- **How does it compare to Coumadin (warfarin)?** Studies show that compared to warfarin or aspirin, apixaban is better at reducing the risk of blood clots and stroke in patients with non-valvular atrial fibrillation. Apixaban may also have less bleeding risk than warfarin.
  - **Advantages of apixaban:**
    - It doesn't require frequent blood tests.
    - It doesn't interact with food.
    - It has fewer significant drug interactions.
  - **Disadvantages of apixaban:**
    - It's available only as the brand-name drug **Eliquis** — there's no generic option.
    - There is no antidote or reversal agent for apixaban. If you have unexpected major bleeding (after an accident for example), it may be harder to stop the bleeding.

Does apixaban have risks?

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

- **It can increase your risk of bleeding.** See the panel below to learn what to watch for and when you may need to visit the emergency room.
- **It can cause upset stomach, heartburn, diarrhea, headache, fatigue (tiredness), or dizziness.** If you notice any of these side effects, talk to your doctor.

When should I get medical help?

Call your doctor if:

- You start, stop, or change the dose of any of the medications listed on page 1
- You notice side effects, such as upset stomach, heartburn, diarrhea, headache, fatigue, or dizziness
- 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 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 have any of these:

- A very bad headache or stiff neck that comes on suddenly
- An accident or injury with a lot of bleeding
- 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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