

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

## What is rivaroxaban?

Rivaroxaban (Xarelto) is an anticoagulant [an-tee-coh-AG-yoo-lehnt]. Anticoagulants are sometimes called “blood thinners.” They don’t really thin the blood. Instead, they:

- Stop the action of a certain protein your body needs to make blood clots
- Stop new clots from forming
- Keep blood clots from getting bigger, so your body can dissolve them over time

Rivaroxaban cannot break up clots you already have.

## Why do I need it?

Rivaroxaban is typically used for:

- **Atrial fibrillation (afib) treatment.** Afib [AY-fibb] is an abnormal heart rhythm that can cause blood clots to form in the heart. By preventing blood clots from forming, rivaroxaban can help prevent a stroke.
- **Deep vein thrombosis (DVT) and pulmonary embolism (PE) treatment.** DVT is a blood clot that forms in the leg. It can break loose and travel through the bloodstream to the lungs where it can block an artery. If a clot blocks an artery in the lung, it is called a PE. Rivaroxaban can help prevent clots from forming or growing and stop pieces of the clot from breaking loose while the body is healing.
- **Blood clot prevention.** People who have hip or knee replacement surgery also use rivaroxaban to prevent blood clots from forming in the legs.

## When and how should I take it?

- Most people need to take it once a day. Some people will need to take it twice a day for several weeks, then drop down to once a day.
- Don’t stop taking rivaroxaban unless your healthcare provider says it’s okay.

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

- **Once-a-day dose:** If you forget to take your daily dose of rivaroxaban, take it as soon as you remember, as long as it is more than 12 hours before your next scheduled dose. Then continue the following day with your next dose. **Do NOT double the dose** (do NOT take twice as much the next time).
- **Twice-a-day dose:** If you take rivaroxaban twice daily and accidentally skip a dose, you can take your missed dose on the same day, with the second dose. This ensures that you get 30 mg of rivaroxaban in a day. (Do not take more than 30 mg in one day.)

## Does rivaroxaban interact with other medicines?

Rivaroxaban can interact with medicines, sometimes by increasing your bleeding risk. **Always talk to your healthcare provider or pharmacist before starting any new medicine or herbal supplement.** Medicines that interact with rivaroxaban include:

- Aspirin or other NSAIDs (ibuprofen, naproxen, Motrin, Advil, Aleve, etc.)
- Carbamazepine (Tegretol)
- Clopidogrel (Plavix)
- HIV protease inhibitors (ritonavir, lopinavir, or indinavir)
- Medicines that end with -azole (ketoconazole or itraconazole)
- Phenobarbital
- Phenytoin (Dilantin)
- Prasugrel (Effient)
- Rifampin
- St. John’s wort
- Ticagrelor (Brilinta)

## Does rivaroxaban have risks?

As with any medicine, rivaroxaban has some risks and side effects:

- It can increase your risk of bleeding. See “*When should I get medical help*” for more information.
- It may cause stomach upset.

## How does rivaroxaban compare to warfarin (Coumadin)?

Studies show that rivaroxaban works as well as warfarin for treating specific conditions.

- **Advantages.** Rivaroxaban has fewer medicine 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**. It can be more expensive because there is no generic option available. An antidote for rivaroxaban is not currently available.

**Is it safe during pregnancy or while breastfeeding?** Women should not take rivaroxaban during pregnancy or while breastfeeding. If you’re pregnant or plan to be, talk to your doctor before starting rivaroxaban.

**How do I store rivaroxaban?** Store it in a cool, dry place, out of the reach of children.

## Who should NOT take rivaroxaban?

Patients who are allergic to rivaroxaban, who have bleeding problems, a mechanical heart valve or significant heart valve disease, or who have poor kidney function should not take rivaroxaban. If you have any of these conditions and you are taking rivaroxaban, tell your healthcare provider right away.

## 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 serious injury, bruising, or bleeding.** Examples include contact sports, extreme sports, or work that puts you on a ladder or around sharp tools.
- **Tell your doctor or dentist that you are taking rivaroxaban at least 1 week (7 days) before having any dental or surgical procedure.**



### *When should I get medical help?*

#### **Call your doctor or anticoagulation clinic if:**

- You start, stop, or change the dose of any of the medicines listed on [the previous page](#).
- 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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