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

What is apixaban?
Apixaban (Eliquis) 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
Apixaban cannot break up clots you already have.

Why do I need it?
Apixaban is typically used for:

• Atrial fibrillation (afib) treatment. Afib [AY-fib] is an abnormal heart rhythm that can cause blood clots to form in the heart. By preventing blood clots from forming, apixaban 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 with the flow of blood to the lungs, causing a PE. Apixaban can help prevent clots from forming or growing, and to 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 apixaban to prevent blood clots from forming in the legs.

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 healthcare provider.

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.

Does apixaban interact with other medicines?
Apixaban interacts with some 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 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 medicines 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)
Does apixaban have risks?
As with any medicine, apixaban poses some risks and side effects. It can:

- **Increase your risk of bleeding.** See the panel on the right to learn what to watch for and when you may need to visit the emergency room.
- **Cause upset stomach, heartburn, diarrhea, headache, fatigue (tiredness), or dizziness.** If you notice any of these side effects, talk to your healthcare provider.

How does it compare to warfarin (Coumadin)?
Studies show that compared to warfarin or aspirin, apixaban works as well as warfarin for treating specific conditions. Apixaban may also have less bleeding risk than warfarin.

- **Advantages.** Apixaban doesn’t require frequent blood tests, doesn’t interact with food, and has fewer significant drug interactions.

- **Disadvantages.** Apixaban is available only as the brand-name drug Eliquis. It is more expensive because there’s no generic option. Also, there is no antidote to reverse its action.

Is it safe in pregnancy or while breastfeeding?
Women should not take apixaban during pregnancy or while breastfeeding. If you are pregnant, or plan to become pregnant, talk to your healthcare provider before starting apixaban.

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

Who should NOT take apixaban?
- People who are allergic to apixaban, have heart valve disease, or bleeding problems should not take apixaban.
- People with poor kidney function can safely take a lower dose of apixaban. If you have kidney disease, work with your healthcare provider to make sure you’re taking the correct dose.

How can I help prevent bleeding?
To help reduce your risk of heavy bleeding:

- **Check with your doctor before doing any activity where you risk serious 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 apixaban at least 1 week (7 days) before having any dental or surgical procedure.**

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