

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-fibb] 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)



When should I get medical help?

Call your healthcare provider if:

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

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.

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