

# Dabigatran (Pradaxa) for stroke prevention in atrial fibrillation

## Information for patients

This leaflet provides further information on dabigatran, which you have been prescribed. If you have any queries or concerns, please speak to your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.

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### What is dabigatran?

- Dabigatran is an anticoagulant medicine
- Anticoagulants reduce the risk of blood clots developing

### Why have I been prescribed dabigatran?

- Having an irregular heart beat (atrial fibrillation) can increase the chance of having a stroke
- On average, over a year, about 1 to 20 people out of 100 with atrial fibrillation will have a stroke
- Dabigatran can reduce your risk of developing a stroke

### How do I take dabigatran?

- Dabigatran is taken as one capsule twice daily (morning and evening)
- Dabigatran capsules should be swallowed whole – do not break or chew them
- Keep the dabigatran capsules in the packaging or bottle that it comes in
- You do not have to avoid any particular food while taking dabigatran
- It is very important that you remember to take the dabigatran as advised. Missing doses may increase your risk of developing a stroke
- If you do miss a dose of dabigatran, you should take it as soon as you can. However, you should not double your dose to make up for a missed dose

Dabigatran comes in two strengths; 110mg and 150mg. Your doctor, nurse or pharmacist will let you know how much you should take each day.

### What are the risks?

Dabigatran can cause side effects such as indigestion, upset stomach or stomach pain in between 1 and 10 users in every 100. If you have any of these symptoms, please tell your haematology doctor, nurse or pharmacist. They may prescribe you an alternative anticoagulant.

Bleeding is a possible side effect of taking **any** anticoagulant and occasionally it can be serious. Serious bleeding affects 1 to 3 people out of 100. If you already take an anticoagulant, you should not be at increased risk of bleeding by switching to dabigatran. Your doctor will advise you on the balance between the benefit of preventing strokes versus the risk of bleeding.

You should seek medical help straight away if you have bleeding, especially if you experience any of the following:

- coughing or vomiting blood
- black stools or blood in your stools
- severe, persistent headache, dizziness or weakness
- fall or injury to your head or face
- blood in your urine
- unexplained or severe bruising
- persistent nose bleeds
- other unexpected or uncontrollable bleeding

If you have any concerns about these risks, your doctor, nurse or pharmacist will discuss these with you in more detail.

### **Are there any alternatives?**

There are other anticoagulants you may be able to take. Your doctor, nurse or pharmacist will discuss these with you, if appropriate.

### **Do I need blood tests when taking dabigatran?**

You will need to have a blood test before starting dabigatran and at least once a year thereafter (if you remain on dabigatran long-term). Occasionally, specialist blood tests may be required on your doctor's advice.

### **Can I take other medicines with dabigatran?**

It is important to let the doctor or pharmacist who prescribes dabigatran know all the other medicines you are currently taking. This includes any medicines you buy over the counter, because they might interfere with dabigatran and affect how it works.

If you start a new medicine, please tell the doctor that you are taking dabigatran.

If you are unsure about whether you can take a particular medicine with dabigatran, please ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist for advice.

### **What else do I need to know when taking dabigatran?**

- Your risk of bleeding is increased – please take this into account before considering taking part in activities with a high risk of injury such as contact sports
- It is not known if dabigatran is safe to use during pregnancy. If you become pregnant or plan to become pregnant, tell your doctor straight away
- To reduce your risks of bleeding during surgery, minor procedures or dental work, please tell your doctor or dentist that you are taking dabigatran. You may need to stop taking it for a short period of time
- The anticoagulation clinic will give you an alert card. Carry this in your wallet or purse to make sure people know you are taking an anticoagulant

### **How do I find out more about dabigatran?**

Please ask your doctor, pharmacist, nurse or anticoagulation clinic for more information.

You can also call King's College Hospital anticoagulation clinics:

Tel: 020 3299 5553     King's College Hospital  
Tel: 01689 864263     Princess Royal University Hospital

### **How do I find out more about atrial fibrillation?**

Please ask your doctor, pharmacist, nurse or anticoagulant clinic for more information.

You can also visit the British Heart Foundation website for further information:  
<https://www.bhf.org.uk/heart-health/conditions/atrial-fibrillation>

### **Sharing your information**

We have teamed up with Guy's and St Thomas' Hospitals in a partnership known as King's Health Partners Academic Health Sciences Centre. We are working together to give our patients the best possible care, so you might find we invite you for appointments at Guy's or St Thomas'. To make sure everyone you meet always has the most up-to-date information about your health, we may share information about you between the hospitals.

### **Care provided by students**

King's is a teaching hospital where our students get practical experience by treating patients. Please tell your doctor or nurse if you do not want students to be involved in your care. Your treatment will not be affected by your decision.

### **PALS**

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) is a service that offers support, information and assistance to patients, relatives and visitors. They can also provide help and advice if you have a concern or complaint that staff have not been able to resolve for you.

PALS at King's College Hospital, Denmark Hill, London SE5 9RS:

Tel: 020 3299 3601  
Email: [kch-tr.palsdh@nhs.net](mailto:kch-tr.palsdh@nhs.net)

You can also contact us by using our online form at [www.kch.nhs.uk/contact/pals](http://www.kch.nhs.uk/contact/pals)

PALS at Princess Royal University Hospital, Farnborough Common, Orpington, Kent BR6 8ND.

Tel: 01689 863252  
Email: [kch-tr.palspruh@nhs.net](mailto:kch-tr.palspruh@nhs.net)

**If you would like the information in this leaflet in a different language or format, please contact PALS on 020 3299 1844.**

**[www.kch.nhs.uk](http://www.kch.nhs.uk)**