

# Apixaban for stroke prevention in atrial fibrillation

## Information for patients

This leaflet provides information about a medicine you have been prescribed called apixaban, including the risks and the benefits. If you have any queries or concerns, please speak to your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.

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### What is apixaban and what is it used for?

- Apixaban is an anticoagulant medicine. This type of medicine is sometimes called a blood-thinning medication, although it does not actually make your blood thinner.
- Anticoagulants reduce the risk of blood clots developing,

### Why have I been prescribed apixaban?

- You have an irregular heart beat (atrial fibrillation) which can increase your 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
- Apixaban can reduce your risk of having a stroke.

### How do I take apixaban?

- Take one tablet twice a day (morning and evening).
- You can take it with or without food
- You do not have to avoid any particular food.
- It is very important that you take apixaban as advised. Missing doses may increase your risk of having a stroke
- If you do miss a dose, take it as soon as you remember. But do not take double your dose to make up for a missed dose

Apixaban comes in two strengths; 2.5mg and 5mg. Your doctor, nurse or pharmacist will let you know how much you should take each day.

### What are the risks?

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

Seek medical help straight away if you have bleeding, especially if you have 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 them with you in more detail.

### **What are the benefits?**

It cuts your risk of having a stroke.

### **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 apixaban?**

You will have a blood test before starting apixaban and then at least once a year after that time, if you stay on apixaban long term. You may occasionally need specialist blood tests, on your doctor's advice.

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

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

You should avoid anti-inflammatory medicines including ibuprofen as these can increase the risk of bleeding. You should also avoid aspirin unless you have been advised to continue by your doctor. If you are not able to use paracetamol, please ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist for advice.

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

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

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

- 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 apixaban 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 apixaban. You may need to stop taking it for a short 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 apixaban?**

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

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

King's College Hospital, tel **020 3299 5553**

Princess Royal University Hospital, tel **01689 864263**

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

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

You can also visit the British Heart Foundation website for more information:

[/www.bhf.org.uk/heart-health/conditions/atrial-fibrillation](http://www.bhf.org.uk/heart-health/conditions/atrial-fibrillation)

### **Sharing your information**

King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust has partnered with Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust through the 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' hospitals. King's College Hospital and Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trusts share an electronic patient record system, which means information about your health record can be accessed safely and securely by health and care staff at both Trusts. For more information visit [www.kch.nhs.uk](http://www.kch.nhs.uk).

### **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. They can also pass on praise or thanks to our teams.

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)

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 our Communications and Interpreting telephone line on 020 3299 4826 or email [kch-tr.accessibility@nhs.net](mailto:kch-tr.accessibility@nhs.net)**