

# Your Guide To: **NOVEL ORAL ANTICOAGULANTS (NOAC)**

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## WHAT IS A NOAC?

NOACs help to prevent harmful blood clots from forming in your blood vessels by affecting the way in which clotting occurs. The four NOACs available are apixaban (Eliquis), dabigatran (Pradaxa), edoxaban (Savaysa) and rivaroxaban (Xarelto). These have slight differences in the way they are taken. It is important that you know which NOAC you have been prescribed and the information that comes with it.

## WHY DO I NEED A NOAC?

A NOAC may be prescribed for you for one of the following reasons:

### 1. Prevention of stroke in patients with atrial fibrillation (AF)

AF is an irregular heartbeat which can increase the risk of blood clots forming in the heart. A blood clot may then travel to the brain or other parts of the body. This may lead to serious health problems such as stroke. NOACs lower your chance of having a stroke by helping to prevent blood clots forming.

### 2. Prevention of blood clots in patients who have had recent hip or knee replacement

Blood clots may occur in people who are not physically mobile. People who have had a hip or knee replacement may need an anticoagulant to prevent blood clots until they are able to move around.

### 3. Treatment of deep vein thrombosis (DVT) and prevention of recurrent DVT

DVT is a blood clot in one of the deep veins in your body, usually in your leg. Continuing treatment in people with a history of blood clots may be required to prevent further blood clots.

### 4. Treatment of pulmonary embolism (PE) and prevention of recurrent PE

PE is a blockage in blood flow when a blood clot from a vein breaks off and travels to the lungs. Continuing treatment in people with a history of blood clots may be required to prevent further blood clots.

## WILL MY BLOOD BE MONITORED DURING TREATMENT?

Unlike warfarin, NOACs do not need regular blood tests. However, you may need a blood test to check your kidney function, liver function and a full blood count before starting treatment and they may be repeated yearly.

## IS BLEEDING A RISK WITH NOACS?

As with all anticoagulants, bleeding is a possibility. It is important that you take your medication exactly as prescribed, avoid injuries that may result in bleeding, notify your doctor before dental or medical/surgical procedures, avoid heavy or binge drinking of alcohol, and consult a doctor before taking any new medications.

### Symptoms of bleeding include:

- Unexpected new pain, swelling or discomfort
- Severe headache, dizziness or weakness
- Unusual bruising, nosebleeds, bleeding of gums, cuts that take a long time to stop bleeding
- Menstrual flow or vaginal bleeding that is heavier than normal
- Blood in your urine, which may be pink or brown
- Red or black stools
- Coughing up blood, or vomiting blood or material that looks like coffee grounds

**If you have any symptoms of bleeding, tell your doctor or visit your nearest hospital emergency department immediately.**

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## **WHAT DO I DO IF I NEED DENTAL OR MEDICAL/SURGICAL TREATMENT?**

Bleeding from medical and dental procedures may be increased if you are taking a NOAC. With simple dental procedures and minor skin surgery, you may not need to stop taking your NOAC. Other procedures, such as endoscopy may require specialist advice. Your doctor will tell you what you need to do.

Tell your doctor or dentist that you are taking a NOAC before any planned procedure including operations in hospital, minor procedures at a surgery center, and some dental procedures. Your NOAC therapy will be considered during the planning of your operation or procedure.

**Do not stop taking your NOAC unless told by your doctor.**