



# Direct Oral Anticoagulant (DOAC) Therapy

Reviewed: January 2026  
Next review: January 2027  
Version 2

Patient name:

Address:

Postcode:

CHI number:

Condition requiring treatment:

Name of anticoagulant:

Dose (see label):

Date treatment started:

Intended duration of treatment:

Name of GP:

Address:

Postcode:

Telephone:



## About this leaflet

You have been given this leaflet because you are starting to take a medicine known as a direct oral anticoagulant (DOAC). An anticoagulant medicine reduces the risk of harmful blood clots by making your blood take longer to clot.

A healthcare professional will:

- go through this book with you
- explain what it all means
- answer any questions you may have.

This leaflet gives you important information about your treatment and who to contact if you need further advice, therefore, keep it safe.

We will also give you an Alert Card. You should always carry this with you in your purse, bag or wallet. In an emergency, this would alert healthcare professionals that you take anticoagulant medication before you receive other treatment.

## **Your medicine**

There are a number of direct oral anticoagulant (DOAC) medicines available. The name of your anticoagulant medicine should be written inside the front cover of this booklet and on your Alert Card. It is important that you know which anticoagulant you have been prescribed and that you read the information leaflet provided with your medicine.

### **How do I take my anticoagulant?**

Check the instructions on the medicine box label or on the information sheet in the box.

You can take apixaban, dabigatran and edoxaban with or without food. It is recommended that you take rivaroxaban with food. You should take your anticoagulant at around the same time each day, washing it down with a full glass of water. If you have difficulty swallowing tablets or capsules, speak to your doctor or pharmacist. **Make sure that you do not run out of your anticoagulant.**

The information leaflet in the medicine box will give you more detailed information about your anticoagulant.

### **What if I forget to take my anticoagulant or take the wrong does?**

If you miss a dose of your anticoagulant, check the advice on the information leaflet you received in the box containing your medicines.

The following is a general guide depending on how many daily doses of anticoagulant you have been prescribed:

#### **Once daily dose**

Take the missed dose as soon as you remember on that day and continue the following day with once a day dose as usual. **Do not take a double dose on the same day.**

#### **Twice daily dose**

If you miss a dose and then remember, only take the missed dose if it is more than 6 hours until your next one. If it's due less than 6 hours later, do not take the missed dose. Just take your next dose as normal. **Do not take more than 2 doses on the same day.**

If you are unsure what to do, contact your GP, nurse or pharmacist for advice, or if out of hours call NHS 24 on telephone number 111. If you think you have missed more than 1 dose or if you have taken more than your normal dose, please contact your GP or NHS 24.

## Taking your anticoagulant regularly

It is important that you take your anticoagulant regularly. Continue taking it until your doctor tells you to stop. If you are having problems remembering to take your anticoagulant and are missing doses, please discuss with your GP or pharmacist.

## Monitoring treatment

You will need blood tests to check for anaemia at least once a year. You will also have your kidney function checked at least once a year to make sure the correct dose is prescribed. You can arrange this with your GP Practice.

## Serious side effects

The most serious side effect of anticoagulants is bleeding. If you experience any of the following, get medical help by phoning your GP or contacting NHS 24 on telephone number 111.

- Nose bleeds that last more than 10 minutes.
- Severe or prolonged bleeding from gums (contact dentist for advice, unless you think this is an emergency then seek immediate help).
- Blood in vomit or your spit.
- Passing blood in your urine or faeces (stools).
- Recent onset of black faeces (stools).
- Severe bruising or extensive bruising for no reason.
- Unusual headaches.
- Unexplained or significant increase in dizziness, tiredness, paleness and/or weakness.
- For women, heavy or increased bleeding during your period or any other vaginal bleeding.

If you cut yourself, apply firm pressure to the site for at least 5 minutes using a clean, dry dressing.

Get immediate medical help by phoning 999 if you:

- are involved in a major accident;
- suffer a significant injury e.g. a blow to the head; and
- are unable to stop bleeding.

## Letting other people know

### Going to your doctor

Your GP should know you are on an anticoagulant but in some cases, especially if it was recently started by a hospital doctor, their records may not be up to date. Tell your doctor that you have been started on an anticoagulant straight away.

### Going to the dentist

You should still go to your dentist as usual, but **your dentist will need to know you are taking an anticoagulant in advance** to make sure that any treatment is safe.

In the majority of cases it may be possible for your dental treatment to go ahead as normal without stopping your anticoagulant.

In some cases it may be necessary to delay or miss a dose of your anticoagulant before dental treatment and start it again afterwards. Your dentist will tell you what to do.

### Going for surgery or medical investigations

If you are due to have a surgical procedure or an invasive investigation, please tell the medical team doing the procedure or investigation that you are taking an anticoagulant. They may ask you to miss 1 or more doses of your anticoagulant to reduce any risk of bleeding.

### Going to your community pharmacy

If you are planning to buy over-the-counter medicines, including alternative or herbal remedies (e.g. St. John's Wort) or supplements, tell the pharmacist that you are taking an oral anticoagulant and show them your anticoagulant Alert Card.

They can then advise you on what medicines are safe to take. It is advisable to buy all over-the-counter medicines at a pharmacy so that a pharmacist can check if they are safe.

It is also important to let other people know you are on an anticoagulant. People you should tell include:

- Relatives, carers or people who help look after you
- Hospital doctors, nurses, pharmacists
- Paramedics and ambulance crew
- Other healthcare professionals e.g. chiropodist/podiatrist

## Things that may affect your anticoagulant

### Other medicines

Some medicines can interact with your anticoagulant. Direct oral anticoagulants (DOACs) should **not** be taken with warfarin except during very short periods of time and **only if specifically instructed** by a doctor, pharmacist or nurse.

You should not take Aspirin unless it has been prescribed. We also advise you to avoid other non-steroid anti-inflammatory drugs like Diclofenac, Ibuprofen and Naproxen. Please note Ibuprofen can be bought over-the-counter in pharmacies or shops with names such as Nurofen®. If you require an anti-inflammatory gel, speak to your community Pharmacist for advice.

You can take Paracetamol and codeine-based painkillers with your anticoagulant but some paracetamol 'plus' products contain aspirin. If you are unsure, please check with your pharmacist or GP.

## Alcohol

Do not exceed the national guidelines on taking alcohol. These are up to 2 units a day, i.e. 14 units per week.

It is dangerous to 'binge drink' or drink heavily while taking anticoagulants.

Refer to [www.nhs.uk/live-well/alcohol-support/calculating-alcohol-units](http://www.nhs.uk/live-well/alcohol-support/calculating-alcohol-units) for advice on calculating alcohol units.

## **For women only**

### Pregnancy

It is not known whether these anticoagulants affect the development of a baby during pregnancy. If you are taking an oral anticoagulant, you should discuss plans for any future pregnancy with your doctor before trying to conceive.

If you think you are pregnant whilst taking an oral anticoagulant you should get a pregnancy test as soon as possible.

If this is positive, get an urgent appointment with your GP or contact a hospital Early Pregnancy Assessment Unit.

### Breast-feeding

It is not recommended to breast-feed while on a direct oral anticoagulant (DOAC). If you are breast-feeding and have been prescribed a DOAC, speak to your midwife or GP.

### Periods

You may experience heavier periods while you are taking oral anticoagulants and may wish to discuss this with your GP, nurse or pharmacist.

## **Tell us what you think**

Please help us improve our patient information by letting us know what you think of this booklet and alert card.

You can email your feedback to the Communications and Marketing team at [comms@gjnh.scot.nhs.uk](mailto:comms@gjnh.scot.nhs.uk) or contact the Pharmacy team directly on 0141 951 5809.

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