

Preventing deep vein thrombosis and pulmonary embolism in coronavirus (COVID-19) infection - Apixaban

Information for patients, relatives and carers

Introduction - Why have I received this leaflet?

You have received this leaflet as you have tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) infection. This increases your risk of having a blood clot such as a deep vein thrombosis (DVT) or pulmonary embolism (PE). To reduce your risk of having a blood clot you were prescribed an anticoagulant medicine to take while you were in hospital. This may have been given to you as an injection. Once you are discharged from hospital you will need to continue taking an anticoagulant medicine to reduce your risk of having a blood clot during your recovery time at home. This leaflet gives you information about the anticoagulant medicine you have been given.

What are anticoagulants?

Anticoagulants are medicines that prevent the blood from clotting. Sometimes they are called blood thinners. The blood is not actually made any thinner - it just takes longer to clot whilst you are taking anticoagulants.

Why do I need an anticoagulant?

Our experience with the coronavirus (COVID-19) infection has shown that it increases the risk of having a blood clot in the veins. This is known as a deep vein thrombosis and most often occurs in the veins of the leg. Sometimes, part of the DVT can move into other parts of the body. This can be serious if the clot moves into the lungs and blocks the lung's blood vessels causing a pulmonary embolism. Symptoms of PE include chest pain, shortness of breath or coughing up blood. For more information about preventing DVT and PE please read the leaflet '**Preventing deep vein thrombosis and pulmonary embolism**' that you have been given at the time of your discharge.

What is apixaban?

You have been prescribed the anticoagulant medicine, apixaban, to take on discharge from hospital. It will help reduce the risk of your blood clotting. Apixaban works by interfering with a substance in your body called Factor Xa that is involved in making your blood clot.

Apixaban is licensed for the prevention of blood clots in people who have knee or hip replacement surgery, for the treatment of DVT and PE, and for the prevention of stroke and systemic embolism in a heart condition known as non-valvular atrial fibrillation. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) has also approved apixaban for these uses in the NHS.

Apixaban is not licensed for the prevention of blood clots in people with coronavirus (COVID-19) infection and it has not been approved by NICE for this use as it is a new disease. There are currently no anticoagulant medicines that have a license for this use. However, as apixaban has been used to prevent and treat blood clots for a number of years, it is being prescribed for patients who may be at higher risk of having a blood clot after testing positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) infection.

Can anyone take apixaban?

No, not everyone can take apixaban. The healthcare professionals looking after you in the hospital have thought about the benefits and risks of taking apixaban for you and have decided that the benefits are likely to outweigh any risks. That is why it has been prescribed for you. The healthcare professionals will also advise on what dose you need to take.

How do I take apixaban?

Apixaban is taken twice a day. Your dose of apixaban will be on the medicine label provided with your medicine. Tablets should be taken with a drink of water, either with or without food. You should try and take apixaban at the same times each day, ideally with 12 hours between doses. If you find it difficult to swallow tablets whole, apixaban tablets may be crushed and mixed with water, apple juice or apple puree just before you take them. If you have your medicines given via a nasogastric tube, apixaban tablets may be crushed and suspended in 60ml of water and then given immediately through the nasogastric tube. Your doctor, nurse or pharmacist will provide guidance in this case.

Please read the medicine label carefully to make sure you follow the instructions and take your apixaban as prescribed.

How long will I have to take apixaban for?

You will be provided with details of how long you should take apixaban on the medicine label and also in your discharge summary. It is important that you take apixaban for the length of time advised, and that you complete the course.

How will I get a supply of apixaban?

If you normally get your medicines supplied in a dosette box and we are unable to give you the full supply, we will contact your GP and community pharmacy to make sure you receive any

additional apixaban to complete the course. In all other cases, we will give you the full supply of apixaban you need to complete your course; your GP does not need to continue the treatment.

What should I do if I miss a dose?

If you miss a dose and remember on the same day, and it is still **more than six hours** until your next scheduled dose, then take the missed dose immediately. Then take the next dose of apixaban at the usual time. If it is **less than six hours** until your next dose then skip the dose you missed, and take the next scheduled dose as normal. Then continue with twice daily doses as before. **Do not take a double dose of apixaban to make up for a missed dose.**

What are the main side effects of apixaban?

Apixaban can increase the risk of bruising and bleeding. If you experience any of the following you should contact your GP or NHS111 for advice:

- nose bleeds
- bleeding from your gums
- unusual or extensive bruising

Seek immediate medical attention if you experience any of the following:

- pink or brown urine
- red or black, tarry stools (poo)
- coughing up blood
- vomiting blood, or vomit that looks like 'coffee grounds'
- excessive on-going bleeding that does not stop on its own

Apixaban may cause other side effects such as nausea and skin rash, however these are usually mild. It is important that you read the manufacturer's information leaflet that comes with your medicine, as it explains the side effects and what to do if you experience them. Although not all of it will apply to you, it is important that you read it, as it covers other important information about apixaban.

Does apixaban interact with other medicines?

Yes, there are some medicines that may interact with apixaban. However, your doctor or pharmacist will check that apixaban is safe for you to use with your other medicines and will let you know if any changes need to be made. Make sure you tell them about all your other medicines including any over the counter, complementary and alternative or herbal medicines.

During your course of apixaban you should avoid other medicines that may increase your risk of bleeding unless you have been specifically advised by your doctor to take them while taking apixaban. Medicines that can increase the risk of bleeding include antiplatelet medicines such as aspirin, and clopidogrel and anti-inflammatory medicines such as diclofenac and ibuprofen.

If you are not able to use paracetamol for pain or for a fever speak with your doctor, pharmacist or nurse for advice.

Carrying an alert card

There is an alert card in the medicines pack that you can fill in and carry with you while you are taking this medicine to let others know that you are taking apixaban. Once you have completed your course of apixaban, stop carrying the alert card.

Who can I ask if I have any questions?

If you have questions or concerns about taking apixaban, please speak with your doctor, nurse or pharmacist on the ward. If you have been discharged from hospital you can call our Medicines Helpline for help with questions or concerns on **0203 311 1713** (Monday to Friday 09.00-17.00). In an emergency call 999.

What other things can I do to prevent blood clots?

- take your anticoagulant medicine as prescribed and complete the course
- it is important that you stay hydrated during your illness and recovery, so drink plenty of fluids
- be mobile, go for walks in or outside your home. If you are finding movement difficult speak to your doctor, nurse or physiotherapist for advice

Make sure you follow the latest Public Health England guidance on coronavirus (COVID-19).

For more information on anticoagulation and coronavirus (COVID-19), visit www.anticoagulationuk.org. Anticoagulation UK is a registered charity and dedicated to providing information, education and support to patients requiring anticoagulation therapy.

How do I make a comment about my visit?

We aim to provide the best possible service and staff will be happy to answer any of the questions you may have. If you have any **suggestions** or **comments** about your visit, please either speak to a member of staff or contact the patient advice and liaison service (**PALS**) on **020 3313 0088** (Charing Cross, Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's & Chelsea hospitals), or **020 3312 7777** (St Mary's and Western Eye hospitals). You can also email PALS at imperial.pals@nhs.net The PALS team will listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries and is often able to help solve problems on your behalf.

Alternatively, you may wish to complain by contacting our complaints department:

Complaints department, fourth floor, Salton House, St Mary's Hospital, Praed Street
London W2 1NY

Email: ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net

Telephone: **020 3312 1337 / 1349**

Alternative formats

This leaflet can be provided on request in large print or easy read, as a sound recording, in Braille or in alternative languages. Please email the communications team:
imperial.communications@nhs.net

Wi-fi

Wi-fi is available at our Trust. For more information visit our website: www.imperial.nhs.uk

Trust wide
Published: August 2020
Review date: August 2023
Reference no:1008v1
© Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust