

# Rivaroxaban (Xarelto) for stroke prevention in atrial fibrillation

## Information for patients

This leaflet provides further information on rivaroxaban, 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 rivaroxaban and what is it used for?

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

### Why have I been prescribed rivaroxaban?

- 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
- Rivaroxaban can reduce your risk of developing a stroke

### How do I take rivaroxaban?

- Rivaroxaban is taken once daily, at the same time each day
- Rivaroxaban tablets are best taken with food
- You do not have to avoid any particular food while taking rivaroxaban
- It is very important that you remember to take the rivaroxaban as advised. Missing doses may increase your risk of developing a stroke
- If you do miss a dose of rivaroxaban, you should take it as soon as you can and then continue the following day as per usual. However, you should not double your dose to make up for a missed dose

Rivaroxaban comes in two strengths; 15mg and 20mg. Your doctor, nurse or pharmacist will let you know how much you should take each day.

The rivaroxaban 15mg tablets are red round shaped tablets:



The rivaroxaban 20mg tablets are brown-red round shaped tablets:



## **What are the risks?**

Rivaroxaban can cause side effects such as dizziness and headaches in between 1 and 10 patients in every 100. If you have either of these symptoms, please tell your haematology doctor, nurse or pharmacist. They may prescribe you an alternative anticoagulant.

If you feel dizzy or have headaches do **not** drive or use machinery.

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 rivaroxaban. 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 rivaroxaban?**

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

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

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

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

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

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

- 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 rivaroxaban 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 rivaroxaban. 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 rivaroxaban?**

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 anticoagulation 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)