

Direct oral anticoagulants (DOACs)

Information for patients, relatives and carers

What are direct oral anticoagulants?

Direct oral anticoagulants, or DOACs, are drugs which prevent harmful blood clots forming in your blood vessels. They do this by slowing down the clotting process. They have a similar effect to thinning the blood as warfarin. These drugs include **apixaban, edoxaban, rivaroxaban & dabigatran**.

When should I take my tablets?

These drugs are short-acting so it is vital you remember to take them at the same time every day or you will not be protected from blood clots.

If your medicine is a twice daily dose try to make sure you take it 12 hours apart, e.g. at 8am and 8pm. If you take rivaroxaban, take it with food.

Make sure that you re-order your repeat prescriptions when you still have at least a week's supply left to prevent running out.

Are there any side effects associated with DOACs?

If you take your DOAC as recommended it is unlikely you will have any problems. However, you should look out for signs of unexpected bruising or bleeding and report them to the clinic or your GP as soon as possible. These may include:

- nose bleeds (longer than 10 minutes)
- blood in stools or black stools
- blood in vomit or sputum (spit) • blood in urine
- spontaneous bruising.

Some patients experience nausea and diarrhoea in the first few days of starting a DOAC. If it does not pass after a few days, contact the surgery.

If you experience heartburn, please ensure you take your DOAC with food and a full glass of water and sit in an upright position for 30 minutes. If heartburn persists, please consult your doctor.

How long will I need to take the DOAC for?

This will depend on the condition requiring treatment. Your doctor or anticoagulant nurse will usually discuss this with you at the start of treatment. If you are unsure please ask. Some people need treatment for a few months, others will need it long-term.

What about monitoring me?

The DOACs do not require routine anticoagulation monitoring for short or long term treatment. However, we do recommend that your kidney function and other blood tests are checked prior to starting a DOAC and then at least once a year. If you have kidney problems you require more frequent monitoring.

What happens if I become unwell?

If you are unwell and unable to drink properly, particularly if you are losing extra fluid through vomiting or diarrhoea, or you have a high temperature and sweats, then it is important that

you discuss your condition with a medical professional, as you may need to temporarily stop or reduce the dose of your DOAC.

What if I forget a dose?

If you are taking a once a day drug:

- take it as soon as you remember but make sure you do not take more than one tablet in a single day.

If you are taking a twice a day drug:

- take your missed dose if it is more than 6 hours to your next dose.
- if it is less than 6 hours to your next dose, miss out the dose you forgot and then take your next dose at the usual time.

Can other medicines or what I eat/ drink affect my DOAC?

We recommend you eat a well-balanced diet but there are no foods that should be avoided.

If you drink alcohol, drink only moderate amounts and avoid binge drinking.

Seek advice from a pharmacist when buying over the counter medicines and herbal supplements and tell them which DOAC you are taking. Also inform any doctor who is prescribing or making changes to your other medications.

Do not take aspirin or ibuprofen unless prescribed by your doctor.

What should I do if I need surgery or a tooth extraction?

If you are due for an operation, please let the surgeon know you are on a DOAC. The pre-assessment clinic will advise you when to stop your medication.

Please advise your dentist and chiroprapist that you are now on a DOAC.

Do I have to change my lifestyle?

Please be aware you are at a slightly increased risk of bleeding but this should not cause you any problems. For example, it may take a cut a few more minutes to stop bleeding than normal.

However, we would advise caution with contact sports such as rugby or extreme sports. Injury could cause serious bleeding or bruising.

DOAC checklist	
You should:	You should not:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • take your DOAC at the same time(s) each day • have annual blood tests • carry your anticoagulant alert card with you • report signs of bleeding and bruising • eat a normal balanced diet • show your alert card to your doctor, nurse or pharmacist if you start any new medication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • miss a dose of DOAC unless advised by us to do so • take extra doses or change your dose of DOAC without first discussing with a doctor • run out of DOAC tablets, always make sure you request your repeat prescription in good time. • take aspirin or ibuprofen unless prescribed by your doctor