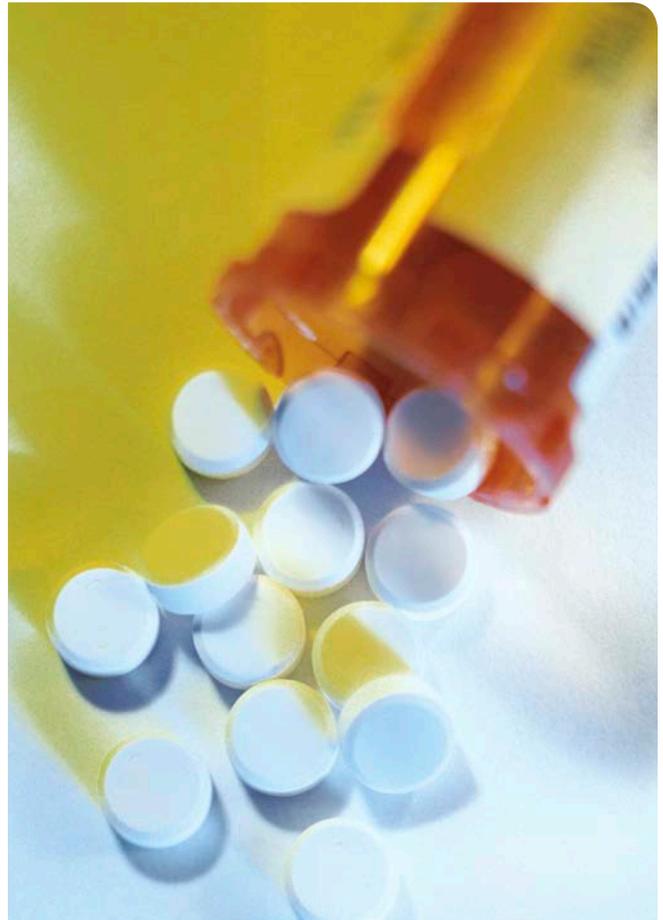




What are Direct-Acting Oral Anticoagulants (DOACs)?

You may know about anticoagulants as “blood thinners” used to treat certain blood vessel, heart and lung conditions, including atrial fibrillation (AFib), peripheral artery disease (PAD) and venous thromboembolism (VTE). Anticoagulants keep blood clots from forming in an artery, a vein or the heart, and may prevent existing clots from getting larger. In particular, they are prescribed for AFib patients because their irregular heartbeats can cause blood to collect in the heart and form a clot that can travel to the brain, cutting off the oxygen and blood supply causing a stroke. About one in five people who have a stroke has AFib.

The more conventional anticoagulants are warfarin (Coumadin) and heparin. However, DOACs are a class of newer medications that may be more convenient medications to take if you are a suitable candidate for them.



What are the advantages to taking a DOAC versus other anticoagulants?

Traditional anticoagulants such as warfarin require monthly blood tests, dietary considerations and careful attention to the possibility of uncontrolled bleeding.

DOACs show to be highly effective yet require less monitoring and may reduce the risk of brain bleed when taken for stroke prevention. They also begin to work, and clear the system when needed, quicker than warfarin.

What are the names of medications I may be prescribed?

Some DOAC medications include:

- Apixaban (Eliquis®)
- Dabigatran (Pradaxa®)
- Rivaroxaban (Xarelto®)
- Edoxaban (Savaysa™)

What do I need to know about taking DOACs?

Excessive bleeding is a risk for anyone on anticoagulants. The effects of warfarin usually can be reversed with vitamin K. Only one DOAC, dabigatran, currently has a specific reversal agent to stop bleeding. However, DOACs do not require as much blood monitoring and have few drug and food interactions.

You should always:

- Keep an anticoagulant alert card with you at all times. Carry it in your purse or wallet so it can be found quickly and easily in case of emergency. You can cut out, complete and use the one provided in this sheet.
- Tell any family members responsible for your care and all healthcare providers that you are taking an anticoagulant.

(continued)



- Adhere to your medication regimen and do not abruptly stop taking your DOACs without first talking with your doctor. Doing so could actually increase your risk of stroke.
- Plan ahead with your doctor when to stop taking your DOACs if you are having surgery or a test such as a colonoscopy.

Could this medication cause problems?

If you do as your doctor tells you, there probably won't be problems. But you must tell your doctor right away if:

- Your urine turns red or dark brown. This could be a sign of urinary tract bleeding.
- Your stools turn red, dark brown or black. This could be a sign of intestinal bleeding.
- You bleed more than normal when you have your period.
- Your gums bleed.
- You have a very bad headache or stomach pain that doesn't go away.
- You get sick or feel weak, faint or dizzy.

- You think you're pregnant.
- You often find bruises or blood blisters.
- You have an accident of any kind.



Anticoagulant Alert Card

Name: _____

Phone: _____ DOB: ____ / ____ / ____

I am on anticoagulant therapy.

I take _____ of _____
(dose) (name of medicine) (when I take it)

In case of injury or bleeding, contact the healthcare provider below.

Healthcare Provider: _____ Phone: _____

Emergency Contact: _____ Phone: _____

HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

- 1 Call **1-800-AHA-USA1** (1-800-242-8721), or visit **heart.org** to learn more about heart disease and stroke.
- 2 Sign up to get *Heart Insight*, a free magazine for heart patients and their families, at **heartinsight.org**.
- 3 Connect with others sharing similar journeys with heart disease and stroke by joining our Support Network at **heart.org/supportnetwork**.

Do you have questions for the doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write your questions for the next time you see your healthcare provider.

For example:

Am I a candidate for DOACs?

Should I wear a medical alert bracelet that says I'm on a DOAC?

My Questions:

We have many other fact sheets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk, manage disease or care for a loved one. Visit **heart.org/answersbyheart** to learn more.