

Haematology Department

Novel oral anticoagulant therapy (NOAC)

**Information for patients,
relatives and carers**

What is novel oral anticoagulant therapy?

Novel oral anticoagulants, or NOACs, 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 dabigatran, rivaroxaban and apixaban. They have all been approved by NICE (national institute for health and care excellence) since 2012.

What dose of NOAC should I take?

This varies from patient to patient as it depends on why you require anticoagulation medication. Your doctor or anticoagulant practitioner will explain this to you in detail.

We recommend you take your NOAC with food and a glass of water. These drugs are short-acting so it is vital you remember to take them every day or you will not be protected from blood clots.

If we have asked you to take your medication twice a day, please make sure you take it 12 hours apart, for example at 8am and 8pm.

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

Are there any side effects associated with NOAC?

If you take your NOAC as recommended by your anticoagulant practitioners 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 NOAC. If it does not pass after a few days, contact your GP.

If you experience heartburn, please ensure you take your NOAC 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 NOAC for?

This will depend on the condition requiring treatment. Your doctor or anticoagulant practitioner 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 indefinitely.

What about monitoring me?

The NOACs do not require routine anticoagulation monitoring for short or long term treatment. However, we do recommend that your kidney function is checked prior to starting a NOAC and then at least once a year. If you have kidney problems you require more frequent monitoring. Your GP will review this medication with you annually.

What happens if I have a problem with my kidneys?

If you develop any kidney problems such as a kidney infection or kidney failure please consult your doctor. You may need to stop or reduce your dose of NOAC during this period. This is important to remember.

What if I forget a dose?

If you are taking a once a day drug, please 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:

- please take your missed dose if it is more than six hours to your next dose.
- if it is less than six hours to your next dose, please 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 NOAC?

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 NOAC you are taking. Also inform any doctor who is prescribing or making changes to your other medications.

Do not take aspirin or medicines containing aspirin unless prescribed by your doctor.

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

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

Please advise your chiropodist (if you have one) and dentist that you are now on a NOAC.

What should I do if I think I may be pregnant?

A NOAC taken during the early weeks of pregnancy may damage the unborn baby. **Do not** plan to become pregnant without consulting your doctor. If you think you may be pregnant while taking a NOAC, please contact your doctor at once.

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.

Can NOAC be reversed?

Currently, we do not have an antidote or reversal agent for the NOACs. If you are admitted to hospital with a serious bleed, please tell the doctor what time you last took your NOAC. Trials are ongoing to find an effective antidote.

Can I use a dosette tray?

Yes, you can use a dosette tray for your NOACs except for dabigatran. Please contact us if you require a special dosette tray for dabigatran. If you are taking dabigatran, it is important not to open the capsule and also not to open the foil packet until you are about to take it.

How can I contact the anticoagulant practitioners?

We are available Monday to Friday (except bank holidays) from 9.30am to 4.30pm on [01256 313295](tel:01256313295) and [01962 825624](tel:01962825624).

There are answer phones on both numbers if we are busy. If you leave us a message we will try to call you back the same working day. Please clearly state your first name, surname, date of birth, NHS number, telephone number you would like us to call you back on and the reason for your call.

NOAC checklist

You should:

- Report signs of bleeding and bruising
- Have annual blood tests to check your kidney function
- Take your NOAC with food and a glass of water
- Take the dose advised by the anticoagulant practitioners
- Carry your anticoagulant alert card with you
- Eat a normal balanced diet
- Carry your anticoagulant alert card with you
- Show your alert card to your pharmacist if you start any new medication

You should not:

- Take aspirin or medicines containing aspirin unless prescribed by your doctor
- Miss a dose of NOAC unless advised by us to do so
- Take extra doses or change your dose of NOAC without first discussing with the anticoagulant practitioners
- Run out of NOAC tablets. Ask your GP for a repeat prescription in good time.

Be aware:



Tell your dentist and other healthcare professionals who treat you that you are taking NOAC



If you think you may be pregnant whilst taking NOAC, contact your doctor at once



Tell the clinic of any changes of address, telephone number and/or doctors' surgery.

www.hampshirehospitals.nhs.uk

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