

Edoxaban

Edoxaban is an oral anticoagulant which directly inhibits a clotting factor in blood. It may be offered for the prevention of stroke and blood clots. This sheet covers considerations for those who have been offered this drug.

AF and stroke risk

People who have atrial fibrillation (AF) are at higher risk of clots forming in the heart. If these clots travel through the bloodstream to the brain then this may cause a stroke.

AF-related strokes are often more serious than other strokes. This is because the large clots which form in the heart can cause more damage resulting in more disability.

To reduce the risk of stroke an anticoagulant is often prescribed. An anticoagulant lengthens the time a clot takes to form by just enough to address any risk of stroke.

Until recently there was only one commonly prescribed anticoagulant. This is warfarin, and it is a very effective medication, dramatically reducing the risk of stroke. Warfarin requires regular monitoring as its effectiveness can vary due to lifestyle, dietary intake, general health and other prescribed medications. Monitoring involves a blood test to check international normalised ratio (INR) levels. The result determines the dose of warfarin.

In recent years further anticoagulants have been developed. These are the non-vitamin K antagonist oral anticoagulants (NOACs), and include apixaban, dabigatran and rivaroxaban. Unlike warfarin, they do not require blood tests as they are unaffected by dietary intake, lifestyle or general health. NOACs also interact less with other medications.

The NOACs are as effective as warfarin in preventing an AF-related stroke.

How it works

Edoxaban is an anticoagulant drug that helps to reduce the risk of blood from clotting inappropriately. It does this by interfering with a substance in the body (Factor Xa, 'ten A') that is involved in the development of blood clots. Unlike warfarin, it does not require regular INR monitoring.

Edoxaban is licensed in the UK for use in non-valvular AF patients to reduce the increased risk of stroke caused by AF. It is also approved for other indications specifically treatment and prevention of deep vein thrombosis (DVT) and pulmonary embolism which is a blood clot in the lungs.

Dose

The recommended dose of edoxaban is 60 mg once daily. If your kidney function is impaired, you have low body weight or you are taking other medication that affects the amount of edoxaban required to be effective, you may be offered a lower dose of 30mg once daily. Talk to your doctor who will advise on the best dose for you.

Before starting treatment, your doctor should talk to you about the risks and benefits of edoxaban compared with other alternatives such as warfarin. The requirement for regular monitoring with warfarin reinforces the importance of treatment. Therefore, the lack of monitoring with edoxaban requires strict adherence from patients.

How do I take edoxaban?

Edoxaban should be swallowed preferably with water. It can be taken with or without food.

Taking your tablet at the same time every day helps to make it part of your daily routine, which can help you to remember.

Other things you can do to help you remember to take edoxaban every day are:

- Use your mobile phone:

Download an app on your smart phone to help you remember to take your edoxaban and other medications, or set an alarm to remind you.

- Use a pill box:

If you have a lot of different medications to take you might find it easier to use a pill box or organiser so you remember which tablets to take each day. These can be purchased from most pharmacies.

What do I do if I forget to take edoxaban?

If you remember on the same day, take the tablet immediately and then take your usual dose the next day.

If you remember the next day or later, take your usual dose for that day. NEVER double the prescribed dose in a single day. It is very important to take the tablets exactly as directed. Never take larger or more frequent doses.

What's the evidence?

The effectiveness and safety of edoxaban was assessed in the largest and longest trial with any novel oral anticoagulant in patients with AF performed to date. The trial was conducted in 21,105 patients and showed that edoxaban had similar efficacy to warfarin for stroke prevention.

What about the potential side effects?

Like other oral anticoagulant medication edoxaban is designed to thin your blood and help prevent blood clots. So you may have an increased risk of bleeding while taking it. It is therefore very important to inform doctors and dentists that you take edoxaban before starting any new medication or before having a procedure or operation.

What to do if you notice bleeding

Speak to your doctor immediately if you experience any of the following signs of bleeding:

- Bruising or bleeding under the skin
- Nose bleeds or cuts that take a long time to stop bleeding
- Red or dark brown urine
- Coughing up or vomiting blood or ground coffee-like material
- Red or black stools
- Bleeding gums
- Bleeding that does not stop by itself
- Abnormally heavy periods

Bleeding is not always obvious. If you experience any side effects talk to your doctor or pharmacist. It is important not to stop taking edoxaban without talking to them first.

For further information on anticoagulants, please see AF Association's Preventing AF-related stroke: anticoagulation booklet.

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