

# Anti-coagulant Medicine

(Direct Thrombin Inhibitor)

## dabigatran (Pradaxa®)

### Pharmacy Services

This is intended as a general reference.  
It does not replace the advice given to you by your healthcare provider.



## What is dabigatran?

Dabigatran (say 'dah-big-ah-tran') is a medicine used to thin the blood so blood clots will not form. It is called a 'blood thinner' or 'anti-coagulant' (meaning to stop blood from coagulating or clotting).

While this medicine stops clots from forming or growing, it does not dissolve blood clots. The body naturally dissolves clots on its own.

You have been prescribed dabigatran for this reason:

- An irregular heart beat (atrial fibrillation)
- A blood clot in your leg or arm (deep vein thrombosis)
- A blood clot in your lung(s) (pulmonary emboli)
- To prevent blood clots from forming after surgery (post-operative venous thromboprophylaxis)

This is how long we expect you will take this medicine: \_\_\_\_\_

## Why should I take this medicine?

Dabigatran is used to prevent blood clots from forming in these situations.

**Atrial Fibrillation:** This is when the upper chambers of your heart (the atria - say 'aye-tree-ya') pump very fast and not regularly. When the atria do not contract pump normally, the blood in the atria can begin to clot. The clot or parts of the clot can break loose and travel to the brain (causing a stroke), or travel to other parts of the body.

**Venous Thromboembolism:** This is when a blood clot has formed and is blocking the blood flow in a vein. This can be in a leg vein (known as deep vein thrombosis) or in the lungs (known as pulmonary embolism).

**After surgery:** People who have just had a knee or hip replacement are more likely to have blood clots form because they are not moving around to keep blood flowing. This medicine can help stop clots from forming.

## How do I take dabigatran?

- Follow your healthcare provider's instructions on how much and how often to take the medicine (called the dose).
- Take this medicine:
  - with a glass of water  
(You can take it with or without food. If it upsets your stomach, take it with food.)
  - at the same time(s) every day  
(Choose a time that is convenient and easy to remember.)
- Swallow the capsule whole.  
**Do not** break or chew the capsule.  
Keep each capsule in its original package until you take it.
- **Do not** take more than what is prescribed for you.
- **Do not** suddenly stop taking this medicine without talking with your doctor. This can increase the chances of you getting a blood clot or having a stroke.

## What should I do if I miss a dose?

Do your best to **never miss a dose**, if possible.

If you do miss a dose, take it as soon as you remember that same day. But, if your next dose is 6 hours away, skip the missed dose.

**Do not** take 2 doses at the same time. Let your doctor know of any missed doses at your next appointment.

Contact your pharmacist, doctor, or nurse practitioner if you have any questions about how to take this medicine.

## What should I watch for?

Most people who take dabigatran do not notice any side effects but they are possible.

The most common side effects are unusual bruising or bleeding and stomach problems.

**Tell your doctor** if you have any of the following:

- indigestion, stomach, upset, and/or stomach pain
- increased bleeding from cuts
- increased bruising from minor injuries
- bruising for no reason
- mild bleeding from gums when brushing or flossing teeth
- nose bleeds that take a long time to stop bleeding
- heavier than usual menstrual periods

Rare but serious side effects include:

- extreme or internal bleeding
- a blood clot in the leg, lower body, or lungs
- a stroke
- an allergic reaction to the medicine

## When should I get help?

Call 9-1-1 if you have any of the following:

- Signs of **extreme** or **internal bleeding**:
  - bloody or black, tarry stools (poop)
  - blood red or brown urine (pee)
  - coughing up or vomiting up blood or brown material that looks like coffee grounds
  - red spots on the skin
  - bleeding that does not stop or slow down with pressure
  - bleeding from the eye, gums, or nose
- Signs of a **clot** in the **leg** or **lower body**:
  - pain or throbbing
  - redness and swelling in the lower legs
  - blue or purple toes
  - swelling of the abdomen
  - back pain that does not go away
  - numbness of the lower body
  - weakness of the legs

- Signs of a **clot** in the **lungs**:
  - wheezing
  - trouble breathing or short of breath
  - chest pain, irregular heartbeat, palpitations
- Signs of a **stroke**:
  - face drooping
  - not able to raise arms up
  - speech is slurred or jumbled, trouble speaking
  - severe headache that does not go away
  - trouble seeing clearly
  - suddenly very dizzy
- Signs of an **allergic reaction** to the medicine:
  - itchy skin, hives, or rash
  - swelling of face, lips, tongue or throat
  - trouble breathing

9-1-1



## Can I take other medicines while taking dabigatran?

Dabigatran could change how other medicines work. Other medicines could change how dabigatran works. This includes medicines prescribed for you, medicines you buy without a prescription, as well as herbal, alternative, and natural medicines.

### Tips to prevent reactions between medicines:

- Ask your pharmacist or healthcare professional about any medicines or supplements that you are currently taking.
- Always check with your healthcare professional before starting and stopping any medicines or medicinal products.
- Remind doctors and nurse practitioners that you are taking dabigatran.
- Try to use the same pharmacy for all your medicines.
- **Do not** take products containing ASA (acetyl salicylic acid or Aspirin) or ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) unless prescribed by a doctor or pharmacist. These products can increase the chances of bleeding.



## Will dabigatran affect my lifestyle?

**Physical Activity:** Regular activity and exercise is important for your health. It also helps improve blood flow, lowering the chances for clots.

Most exercise is safe. Some examples of good types of exercise are walking, cycling, swimming, and golf. Stay away from any activities where injuries are common, such as contact sports.

**Your health:** If you have an illness that causes you to throw up (vomit), have diarrhea, or have a fever for more than a few days, contact your doctor. Your dose of dabigatran might need to be changed.

**Tell others:** It is a good idea to wear a medical alert ID bracelet or carry a medical alert pocket card with you that says you are taking dabigatran.

Before you have any dental work, medical procedures, or surgery, tell the doctor or dentist you are taking dabigatran.

**Alcohol:** Drinking alcohol can make you unsteady. It can also cause your heart to beat faster and irregularly. This can make you feel dizzy. If you are unsteady or dizzy, you could hurt yourself, causing bruising and bleeding.

**Travel:** If you are taking a long trip, try to stretch your legs and move around each hour to keep your blood circulating.

**Pregnancy:** Usually, this medicine should not be taken when pregnant or breastfeeding. Tell your doctor if you are pregnant, planning to become pregnant, or are breastfeeding.

---

If you have any questions about this medicine:

- Ask your pharmacist.
- Ask your doctor.
- Call HealthLinkBC **8-1-1** or TTY 7-1-1  
Speak to a nurse any time,  
a pharmacist after hours, or  
a dietitian on weekdays.

HealthLinkBC is open 24 hours. Available in 130 languages. For an interpreter, say your language in English. Wait until an interpreter comes on the phone.

---

This information is intended only for the person to whom it was provided.

The information contained in this pamphlet is designed to be a general reference for your medication.

While we have taken care to make sure the information is accurate as of the date published:

- It is not intended to provide specific medical advice or replace the specific recommendations of a healthcare professional.
- It is not intended to act as a substitute for any prescribed treatment.

The Fraser Health Authority is not responsible for any problems that might arise from the use or misuse of the information provided in this pamphlet.



[fraserhealth.ca](http://fraserhealth.ca) ♦ [phsa.ca](http://phsa.ca) ♦ [providencehealthcare.org](http://providencehealthcare.org) ♦ [vch.ca](http://vch.ca)

August 2019

FH Catalogue #266173 To order: [patienteduc.fraserhealth.ca](http://patienteduc.fraserhealth.ca)  
VCH/PHC Catalogue #EA.485.D33 To order: [vch.eduhealth.ca](http://vch.eduhealth.ca)

