

Patient information

VTE prophylaxis with rivaroxaban post orthopaedic surgery

What causes a deep vein thrombosis (blood clot)?

Blood clots, also referred to as a venous thromboembolism (VTE), are the result of the presence of a blood clot in the veins. VTE is an umbrella term for a deep vein thrombosis (DVT) and pulmonary embolism (PE).

A DVT is a blood clot that forms in the veins deep in your leg, usually the calf or thigh. The blood clot blocks the flow of blood in the affected vein, either partially or completely. This clot can also travel through the body and become lodged within smaller vessels. This can happen in your lungs and cause a PE.

These are both serious conditions which require immediate treatment.

What are the symptoms of a VTE?

VTEs do not always present with symptoms, however, common symptoms of both DVTs and PEs can be found below.

Symptoms of a DVT:

- Tenderness in the leg/calf
- Redness
- Swelling and a feeling of tightness
- Pain.

Symptoms of a PE:

- Chest pain that is sharp in nature and worse when inhaling
- Shortness of breath
- Coughing - usually dry but may include coughing up blood or mucus
- Sweating
- Feeling light-headed or dizzy
- Passing out.

How can a VTE be prevented?

1. **Movement** - it is important to listen to the physiotherapy team following your surgery and do the exercises they've recommended.
2. **Exercise** - after your surgery it is likely you will not be able to get around easily. However, you will be asked to do some exercises. You may also be offered compression socks to aid blood flow in your legs.
3. **Hydration** - following surgery please make sure to drink plenty of fluid and stay hydrated.
4. **Medication** - after your surgery you will be started on medication for a short period of time.

What is rivaroxaban and how does it work?

Rivaroxaban is an anticoagulant. It is a type of medication that slows down your body's ability to clot and therefore reduces the likelihood of dangerous blood clots forming.

How do I take rivaroxaban?

Rivaroxaban is a medication that is taken orally (by mouth) and the tablet should be swallowed whole, preferably with food.

The usual treatment for prevention of VTE in adults is **10mg tablet once a day**. Try to take this medication at the same time every day.

If you forget to take a dose, take it as soon as you remember. Do not take more than one dose in the same day to make up for a forgotten dose.

If you have swallowing difficulties, the tablet can be crushed and mixed with water or apple puree/juice. Tablets must be taken immediately after crushing.

How long will I be on rivaroxaban for?

The duration of treatment depends on your operation:

For a **hip operation**: treatment is recommended for a duration of **four weeks** from the day of surgery.

For a **knee operation**: treatment is recommended for a duration of **two weeks** from the day of surgery.

Is there any medication I can't take whilst on rivaroxaban?

Some medication can increase the risk of side effects from rivaroxaban. Please try to avoid the following medication: Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) - this includes ibuprofen, naproxen, and aspirin.

Please alert your doctor or pharmacist if you are taking any of the following medications before your surgery:

- Any other anticoagulant such as warfarin, apixaban, edoxaban, dabigatran or tinzaparin.
- Any antiplatelet such as clopidogrel, aspirin or ticagrelor.
- Medicines to treat fungal or bacterial infections.
- Medicines to treat HIV.
- Medicines to treat epilepsy, in particular carbamazepine, phenytoin or phenobarbital.

Over the counter medications - if you are purchasing any medications including any vitamins over the counter, please inform the pharmacy team or one of your doctors. Some over the counter medication can interact with rivaroxaban and therefore may need to be held temporarily following your operation.

Do I need to adjust my diet?

Rivaroxaban does not interact with any foods or drinks.

What are the side effects of this medication?

Like all medications rivaroxaban can cause side effects, however, not everybody gets them:

- Constipation and/ or diarrhoea
- Gastrointestinal discomfort
- Nausea
- Headache
- Vomiting
- Increased risk of bleeding and bruising
- Fatigued and lack of energy
- Dizzy and light-headed.

It is usual to bleed more easily than normal whilst taking rivaroxaban. Please **seek urgent medical attention** if you experience any of the following symptoms:

- Uncontrolled bleeding from a wound that will not stop
- Blood in your urine - this can range from appearing slightly pinkish to bright red
- Black tarry stools/poo
- Vomiting blood or a coffee ground substance
- Any head injury or severe headaches
- Sudden loss of vision or blurred vision
- Nose bleeds lasting longer than 5-10 minutes
- Numbness or tingling in your arms or legs
- Any signs of an allergic/anaphylactic reaction.

Rivaroxaban alert card

You will need to always carry an anticoagulant alert card with you whilst on this medication.

Make sure to show this to any healthcare professional you encounter whilst on this medication. It is also useful if you have an accident so that the person treating you knows you are on this medication.

Are there alternatives?

If rivaroxaban is unsuitable, you may be prescribed a daily injection called tinzaparin.

This medication works in a similar way to rivaroxaban to help prevent a blood clot.

Please speak to your pharmacist or surgeon if you have questions about these alternatives.

Further information

If you have any questions regarding the medication, please follow the options below:

Prior to or during admission:

- Further information regarding rivaroxaban can be found in the following link: <https://www.nhs.uk/medicines/rivaroxaban/>.
- On admission a member of the pharmacy team will come and see you on the ward and be happy to answer any questions you may have regarding rivaroxaban.

Following admission:

- Talk to your community pharmacist.

If you would like any information regarding access to the West Suffolk Hospital and its facilities, please visit the website for AccessAble (formerly DisabledGo)

<https://www.accessable.co.uk>



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