Helping prevent stroke caused by non-valvular atrial fibrillation

This booklet is intended for adult patients prescribed ELIQUIS® (apixaban) for the prevention of stroke in non-valvular atrial fibrillation.

Always read the patient information leaflet in your medication package.
You have been given this booklet because you have been prescribed ELIQUIS® (apixaban) to help reduce your risk of having a stroke due to a type of atrial fibrillation (AF) known as non-valvular atrial fibrillation (NVAF).

This booklet will explain how NVAF can lead to a stroke and how this medicine can work to help prevent that from happening.

You should also read the patient information leaflet provided inside your medicine package.
WHAT IS ATRIAL FIBRILLATION (AF)?

AF is a heart condition that makes your heart beat out of rhythm and this can sometimes be fast.

Some people with AF do not experience any symptoms, although a fast heartbeat may be felt (some people describe these as ‘palpitations’). Other possible symptoms include:

- tiredness
- shortness of breath
- chest pain (angina)
- dizziness

AF can also be described as ‘persistent’, when episodes last seven days or more, or permanent, when the heart rhythm disturbance is continuous.
Upper chambers of the heart
The heart is made up of four chambers - the left and right atria (two upper chambers), and the left and right ventricles (two lower chambers).

AF occurs when chaotic electrical activity develops in the atria, disturbing your heart’s natural rhythm. As a result, the atria don’t contract properly, which means your heart cannot pump blood as efficiently as usual.
WHAT CAUSES AF?

The exact cause of AF is not fully understood, but the risk increases as you get older and it is more common in people with other heart conditions.

For example:

- high blood pressure
- thickening/blockage of the blood vessels that supply the heart
- heart attack
- heart disease from birth
- after heart surgery
ARE THERE COMPLICATIONS ASSOCIATED WITH AF?

The main risk associated with AF is stroke.

As the blood is not being properly pumped away from the heart, it may collect or ‘pool’ and a clot could develop in the heart. If the clot leaves the heart and enters the small blood vessels of the brain, the flow of blood may block and result in a stroke.

People with AF are more likely to have a stroke compared with people who do not have AF.
1. Clot forms in the heart

2. Clot leaves the heart

3. Clot travels to the brain

4. Clot blocks blood vessel in the brain and can cause a stroke
WHAT ARE THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF A STROKE?

Strokes can happen suddenly and have immediate and lasting effects. **You must act quickly,** so here are some simple things to look out for that can help you recognise a stroke:

- numbness, weakness or paralysis on one side of your body (for example, a limp arm or leg, or a drooping lower eyelid or mouth or face dropped on one side)

- slurred speech, or difficulty finding words or understanding speech

(continued overleaf)
- sudden blurred vision or loss of sight
- confusion or unsteadiness, or
- a sudden, severe headache

If you experience any of these signs or symptoms, you must seek medical attention immediately — call 999.
MEDICINE TO HELP PREVENT STROKE IN PEOPLE WITH NON-VALVULAR AF

Anticoagulants are drugs that work by altering the time it takes your blood to clot and the way in which it clots.

This can help to prevent blood clots that cause a stroke.

Your doctor has carefully assessed your risk of having a stroke and has decided to prescribe the anticoagulant ELIQUIS® (apixaban).

This medicine is prescribed to reduce your chances of having a stroke caused by non-valvular atrial fibrillation.
ABOUT ELIQUIS® (apixaban)

How to take ELIQUIS® (apixaban)

You should always take your medicine exactly as your doctor has told you to ensure that it is working for you.

This medicine must always be taken twice a day. For example, one in the morning and one in the evening. Try to take the tablets at the same times every day.

To help you remember, try to fit in taking your tablets with a normal routine that happens twice a day. You should also read the patient information leaflet that came with your medication.
Picture is not an actual representation of ELIQUIS® tablets.
The usual dose is one 5mg tablet twice daily. (Certain groups of patients may be prescribed 2.5mg twice daily by their doctor.)

You should swallow the tablet with a glass of water. It can be taken with or without food. If you have difficulty swallowing tablets, talk to your doctor.

This medicine does not treat the symptoms of AF, such as a fast heart rate, so you should also continue to take any other medication prescribed to you by your doctor for this or any other medical condition.
HOW LONG TO TAKE ELIQUIS® (apixaban) FOR

The length of treatment can vary: some people may need to take it long term. You should always follow your doctor’s instructions and continue to take your medication for as long as your doctor has told you to do so.

DO NOT STOP TAKING ELIQUIS® (apixaban) WITHOUT DISCUSSING IT WITH YOUR DOCTOR FIRST!
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What should I do if I miss a dose?

If you miss a dose, take the medicine as soon as you remember and then take the next tablet at the usual time, then continue as normal. If you are not sure what to do, or have missed more than one dose, ask your doctor, pharmacist or nurse.
What should I do if I take too much?

Tell your doctor immediately if you have taken more than your prescribed dose. Take the medicine pack with you, even if there are no tablets left. If you take more tablets than recommended, you may have an increased risk of bleeding.
THINGS TO BE AWARE OF WHEN TAKING ELIQUIS® (apixaban)

- Inside the tablet pack together with the package leaflet you may find a Patient Alert Card or your doctor might give you a similar card. It is important you carry this card with you at all times while you are taking this medicine. Show the alert card to your pharmacist, dentist and other healthcare professionals that treat you.

- Inform your doctor and dentist that you are taking ELIQUIS® (apixaban) if you are having any surgical or dental procedures. You may need to reduce your dose or temporarily stop taking this medicine and your doctor or dentist will advise you on how to do this.

- Make sure that you tell your doctor, pharmacist or dentist about any other medicines you are taking, including medicines you have bought yourself in the pharmacy without a prescription (e.g. aspirin for headaches or colds) and any herbal remedies you may be taking (e.g. St. John’s Wort).
Certain medicines and supplements can interfere with the anticoagulant effects of this medicine, increasing the risk of bleeding or making it less effective. A list of medicines that might affect ELIQUIS® (apixaban) can be found in the patient information leaflet inside the medicine package.

As with all anticoagulants, when taking this medicine it is important that you look out for any signs of bleeding and seek medical advice immediately if any signs of bleeding occur.

You should not take ELIQUIS® (apixaban) if you are allergic to any of the ingredients, if you are bleeding excessively, if you have (or are thought to have) a condition that increases the risk of serious bleeding, if you have liver disease leading to an increased risk of bleeding or if you are taking medicines to prevent blood clotting.
In addition, this medicine is not recommended in other instances such as pregnancy, breast feeding, in patients with prosthetic heart valves (with and without atrial fibrillation), and in patients taking certain other medications (please read the patient information leaflet for the full list). Please tell your doctor straight away if you think any of these apply to you.

Please ensure that you read the patient information leaflet (inserted in the medicine packaging) thoroughly before taking the medicine.
POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS

Like all medicines, ELIQUIS® (apixaban) can cause side effects, although not everybody gets them.

Like other similar medicines (anticoagulants), this medicine may cause bleeding that may potentially be life-threatening and require immediate medical attention.

Other common side effects include: Bleeding in your eyes (including red eye), in your stomach (dark/black blood in the stools), your bowel, from your rectum, from your nose, from your gums or blood found in the urine (on testing).
Additional common side effects include anaemia which may cause tiredness or paleness, bruising and swelling, low blood pressure which may make you feel faint or have a quickened heartbeat, nausea (feeling sick) and blood tests may show an increase in gammaglutamyltransferase (GGT).
Further information on possible side effects can be found in the patient information leaflet inside your tablet pack.

Tell your doctor, nurse or pharmacist about any side effects you experience, even if they are not listed in the patient information leaflet or in this booklet.
You can help provide more information on the safety of this medicine by reporting any side effects you may get. See www.mhra.gov.uk/yellowcard for how to report side effects. Side effects should also be reported to Bristol-Myers Squibb Medical Information on 0800 731 1736 or medical.information@bms.com
IMPORTANT INFORMATION INSIDE YOUR PACK OF ELIQUIS® (apixaban)

You will find a Patient Information Leaflet together with a Patient Alert Card inside your pack of ELIQUIS® (apixaban). You should read the Patient Information Leaflet and complete the Patient Alert Card (or ask your doctor to do it). The Patient Alert Card should be kept with you at all times. The Patient Alert Card explains the importance of taking ELIQUIS® (apixaban) regularly as instructed by your doctor, lists the main signs and symptoms of bleeding and when to seek medical attention.
Patient Alert Card

Eliquis®
(apixaban)

Carry this card with you at all times

Show this card to your pharmacist, dentist and any other healthcare professionals that treat you
GETTING SUPPORT

There are a number of UK organisations which provide invaluable help, information and support to people affected by atrial fibrillation and stroke.

Here are the contact details of some organisations you may find useful:

Atrial Fibrillation Association
Tel: 01789 867502 (24 hour)
Website: www.afa.org.uk
Email: info@afa.org.uk

The AF Association provides information, support and guidance on access to treatments for Atrial Fibrillation (AF)
Anticoagulation UK
Website: www.anticoagulationuk.org
Email: info@anticoagulationuk.org

Provides information and support for people on anticoagulant medications and their healthcare professionals.

Arrhythmia Alliance
Tel: 01789 867501 (24 hour)
Website: www.heartrhythmmalliance.org
Email: info@heartrhythmmalliance.org

Arrhythmia Alliance is a coalition of patients, professionals, charities, government bodies, care providers and allied professionals. It works to promote the timely diagnosis and effective management of arrhythmias to extend and improve the lives of the millions around the world.
Stroke Association
Helpline: 0303 3033 100
Website: www.stroke.org.uk

Provides information about stroke, emotional support and details of local services and support groups. Factsheets available include the effects of stroke, and reducing your risk of stroke.
## Your future appointments

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