

Rivaroxaban for preventing stroke and embolism in people with atrial fibrillation

NICE 'technology appraisal guidance' advises on when and how drugs and other treatments should be used in the NHS.

This document is about when **rivaroxaban** should be used to prevent stroke and systemic embolism in people with atrial fibrillation in the NHS in England and Wales. It explains guidance (advice) from NICE (the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence). It is written for people with atrial fibrillation but it may also be useful for their families or carers or for anyone with an interest in the condition.

It does not describe atrial fibrillation or the treatments in detail – a member of your healthcare team should discuss these with you. You can get more information from the organisations listed on page 4.

This may not be the only possible treatment for atrial fibrillation. Your healthcare team should talk to you about whether it is suitable for you and about other treatment options available.

What has NICE said?

NICE recommends rivaroxaban as a possible treatment to prevent stroke and systemic embolism in some people with atrial fibrillation (see below).

Who can have rivaroxaban?

You should be able to have rivaroxaban if you have atrial fibrillation without underlying heart valve disease and at least one of the following applies:

- you have congestive heart failure (when the heart doesn't pump blood as well as it should)
- you have high blood pressure
- you are 75 or older
- you have diabetes
- you have had a stroke or transient ischaemic attack (mini stroke) in the past.

Before starting treatment, your doctor should talk with you about the risks and benefits of rivaroxaban compared with another drug called warfarin. If you are already taking warfarin, you and your doctor should take into account how well your INR (international normalised ratio – a measure of how long it takes blood to clot) is controlled when deciding whether to switch to rivaroxaban.

Why has NICE said this?

NICE looks at how well treatments work, and also at how well they work in relation to how much they cost the NHS. NICE recommends rivaroxaban because its cost is justified by the benefits it provides compared with other treatments available on the NHS.

Atrial fibrillation

Atrial fibrillation is a condition that affects the heart, causing it to beat irregularly and too fast. When this happens, the heart cannot efficiently pump blood around the body. Blood can also collect in one of the heart's chambers and clot. If this happens, the clot can move and block a blood vessel somewhere else in the body (called a systemic embolism). If this cuts off the blood supply to the brain it is known as a stroke.

Rivaroxaban

Rivaroxaban (also known as Xarelto) is an anticoagulant drug that helps to prevent blood from clotting. It does this by interfering with a substance in the body (Factor Xa) that is involved in the development of blood clots.

What does this mean for me?

When NICE recommends a treatment, the NHS must make sure it is available to those people it could help, normally within 3 months of the guidance being issued.

So, if you have atrial fibrillation, and you and your doctor think that rivaroxaban is the right treatment for you (see 'What has NICE said?' on page 2), you should be able to have the treatment on the NHS. Please see www.nice.org.uk/aboutguidance if you think you are eligible for the treatment but it is not available.

More information

The organisations below can provide more information and support for people with atrial fibrillation. NICE is not responsible for the quality or accuracy of any information or advice provided by these organisations.

- AntiCoagulation Europe, 020 8289 6875
www.anticoagulationeurope.org
- Arrhythmia Alliance, 01789 450 787
www.arrythmiaalliance.org.uk
- Atrial Fibrillation Association (AFA), 01789 451 837
www.afa.org.uk or www.afa-international.org
- The Stroke Association, 0303 303 3100
www.stroke.org.uk

NHS Choices (www.nhs.uk) may be a good place to find out more. Your local patient advice and liaison service (usually known as 'PALS') may be able to give you more information and support. If you live in Wales you should speak to NHS Direct Wales for information on who to contact.

About NICE

NICE produces guidance (advice) for the NHS about preventing, diagnosing and treating medical conditions. The guidance is written by independent experts, including healthcare professionals and people representing patients and carers. They consider the evidence on the disease and treatments, the views of patients and carers and the experiences of doctors, nurses and other healthcare professionals, and consider the costs involved. Staff working in the NHS are expected to follow this guidance.

To find out more about NICE, its work and how it reaches decisions, see www.nice.org.uk/aboutguidance

This document and other versions of the guidance aimed at healthcare professionals are available at www.nice.org.uk/guidance/TA256

The NICE website has a screen reader service called Browsealoud, which allows you to listen to our guidance. Click on the Browsealoud logo on the NICE website to use this service.

We encourage NHS and voluntary organisations to use text from this document in their own information about atrial fibrillation.

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