

# Dabigatran

## What is dabigatran?

**Dabigatran (sounds like 'da-be-ga-tran')** is an anticoagulant or 'blood thinner'. It is used to prevent and treat blood clots by slowing down your body's ability to clot blood. Preventing blood clots helps lower your risk of stroke. You may be prescribed dabigatran:

- if you have atrial fibrillation (irregular heart beat), which increases your risk of stroke
- after hip or knee surgery when, your risk of blood clots is increased
- to treat deep vein thrombosis (DVT) – blood clots that form in blood vessels, usually in your legs or arms
- to treat pulmonary embolism (PE) – blood clots that form in your lungs
- to prevent DVTs or PEs from forming again.

## What dose of dabigatran?

Dabigatran capsules are available in different strengths: 75 mg, 110 mg and 150 mg. Your doctor or pharmacist will tell you the strength that is right for you. Your dose of dabigatran and the length of time you take it will depend on what it is being used for.

My dose of dabigatran	
<p><b>I am taking dabigatran for:</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Atrial fibrillation, to prevent stroke</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> After hip or knee surgery, to prevent clots</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> _____</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> To treat clots (DVT/PE)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> To prevent clots from forming again</p>
<p><b>My dose is:</b></p> <p>_____</p>	
<p><b>For how long:</b> _____</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep taking dabigatran as your doctor has told you to.</li> <li>• Stopping early can put you at greater risk of getting blood clots or stroke.</li> </ul>	

## How to take dabigatran

### Know your capsule strength



Dabigatran capsules are available in different strengths: 75 mg, 110 mg and 150 mg.

- Check which strength you are taking.

### Testing and monitoring



When you first start taking dabigatran, you will need blood tests to check how well your kidneys and liver are working.

- This will help your doctor make sure it is safe for you, and the dose is correct.
- Regular blood testing to check the level of dabigatran is not needed.

### Take dabigatran with food



Dabigatran can be taken with or without food, but it is best taken with food to make sure it is properly swallowed.

- Swallow your capsules whole with a full glass of water.
- If you have problems swallowing the capsules, tell your pharmacist.
- Take your dabigatran dose about the same time each day.

### Store capsules in their foil package



Dabigatran capsules must be kept in the original foil package to protect them from moisture.

- If you store the capsules in a pill box or medication reminder box, keep them in the foil packaging.

### If you miss a dose



If you're taking dabigatran for **stroke prevention or blood clots** and you miss a dose:

- If the next dose is less than 6 hours away, skip the missed dose.
- If there are more than 6 hours until the next dose, take the missed dose as soon as you remember.
- Don't take two doses at the same time – this increases your risk of bleeding.

If you're taking dabigatran for **knee or hip replacement** and you miss a dose:

- Skip the missed dose and take your usual dose at the same time the next day.
- Don't take two doses at the same time - this increases your risk of bleeding.

### Don't run out



Missing doses increases your risk of getting blood clots.

- Make sure you don't run out of capsules – refill your prescription early.

### Tell your health professionals



Make sure to tell any other health professionals you see (such as your dentist, pharmacist, podiatrist, nurse) that you are taking dabigatran.

- You may need to stop using this medicine for several days before having surgery, dental appointments, or medical tests.

### Changing from warfarin



If you are being changed from other blood thinners, like warfarin, follow your doctors instructions about the timing of your doses, very carefully.

- Ask your doctor or pharmacist if you are unsure.

### Interactions with other medicines



Dabigatran interacts with many other medicines and herbal supplements such as antidepressants, ibuprofen, diclofenac, aspirin, carbamazepine, phenytoin, amiodarone and St John's Wort.

- This can mean your medicines don't work the way they are meant to, or you may have more side effects.
- Check with your doctor or pharmacist before starting dabigatran or before starting any new medicines, including herbal medicines or vitamins or medicines that you buy yourself, such as pain relief.

### Pregnancy or breastfeeding



Dabigatran must NOT be taken during pregnancy or if you're breastfeeding.

- If you plan to become pregnant or think you are pregnant, tell your doctor as soon as possible.

## Side effects

Like all medicines dabigatran can cause side effects, although not everyone gets them.

**Common side effects** include nausea (feeling sick), indigestion, tummy cramps and headache. These may go away with time. Tell your doctor if troublesome.

**Injuries:** You might bleed or bruise more easily while you are taking dabigatran.

- Be careful when shaving, clipping fingernails, brushing and flossing your teeth or playing sports.
- Avoid new tattoos and piercings as these can cause bruising and bleeding.
- If you have a fall or hurt your head or body, get medical attention immediately, even if you feel okay.

**Increased risk of bleeding:** Dabigatran increases your risk of bleeding. If you have any of the following signs of bleeding, contact your doctor immediately or phone Healthline 0800 611 116 for free 24-hour health advice.

- becoming pale, very weak and tired or short of breath
- any bleeding from your gums, or cuts or nosebleeds that won't stop bleeding
- blood in your stools (poo) – black, tarry stools
- blood in your urine (wee) – pink, red or brown-coloured urine
- heavy periods (menstrual bleeding)
- coughing up blood or vomit that looks like coffee grounds.

## Keep all medicines out of reach of children

Keep dabigatran out of reach and out of sight of children.

If you think a child or another person has taken dabigatran by mistake, contact your doctor, or phone Healthline 0800 611 116 straight away.



## References

1. [Dabigatran New Zealand Formulary](#)
2. [Pradaxa Consumer Medicine Information Medsafe, NZ](#)