

## Understanding NICE guidance

---

Information for people who use NHS services

# Dabigatran etexilate to reduce the risk of venous thromboembolism after hip or knee replacement surgery

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

This leaflet is about when **dabigatran etexilate** should be used to reduce the risk of venous thromboembolism in adults who have surgery to replace their hip or knee joints in the NHS in England and Wales. It explains guidance (advice) from NICE (the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence). It does not cover using dabigatran to reduce the risk of venous thromboembolism in adults who have other types of surgery. It is written for people who have had an operation to replace their hip or knee joints but it may also be useful for their families or carers or anyone with an interest in the topic.

It does not describe venous thromboembolism or the treatments in detail – a member of your healthcare team should discuss these with you. Some sources of further information and support are on the back page.

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

## What has NICE said?

Dabigatran etexilate is recommended as a possible treatment to reduce the risk of venous thromboembolism in adults who have surgery to replace their hip or knee joint.

## Venous thromboembolism

When a blood clot forms in one of the deep veins in the leg, thigh, pelvis or arm it is known as deep vein thrombosis. The clot itself is not life threatening, but if it comes loose it can be carried in the blood to another part of the body where it can cause problems – this is called a venous thromboembolism.

If the clot travels to the lungs it is called a pulmonary embolus and it can be fatal. Even if a blood clot does not come loose, it can still cause long-term damage to the veins leading to pain and swelling.

People having surgery to replace their hip or knee joint are at risk of venous thromboembolism because they are inactive during and after their operation and because of the damage caused during surgery.

## Dabigatran etexilate

Dabigatran etexilate (also known as Pradaxa) is an anticoagulant medicine that helps to prevent blood from clotting. It does this by interfering with a substance in the body (thrombin) that is involved in the development of blood clots. Dabigatran should be given shortly after surgery to help prevent venous thromboembolism.

### What does this mean for me?

When NICE recommends a treatment, the NHS must ensure it is available to those people it could help, normally within 3 months of the guidance being issued. So, if you are having surgery to replace your hip or knee joint, and your doctor thinks that dabigatran is the right treatment for you, you should be able to have the treatment on the NHS. Please see [www.nice.org.uk/aboutguidance](http://www.nice.org.uk/aboutguidance) if you appear to be eligible for the treatment but it is not available.

## More information

The organisations below can provide more information and support for people who have had hip or knee replacement surgery. Please note that 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](http://www.anticoagulationeurope.org)
- Lifeblood: The Thrombosis Charity, 020 7633 9937  
[www.thrombosis-charity.org.uk](http://www.thrombosis-charity.org.uk)

NHS Direct online ([www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk)) may be a good starting point for finding out more. Your local Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) may also be able to give you further advice and support.

## About NICE

NICE produces guidance (advice) for the NHS about preventing, diagnosing and treating different medical conditions. The guidance is written by independent experts including healthcare professionals and people representing patients and carers. They consider all the research on the disease or treatment, talk to people affected by it, 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](http://www.nice.org.uk/aboutguidance)*

*This leaflet and other versions of the guidance aimed at healthcare professionals are available at [www.nice.org.uk/TA157](http://www.nice.org.uk/TA157)*

*You can order printed copies of this leaflet from NICE publications (phone 0845 003 7783 or email [publications@nice.org.uk](mailto:publications@nice.org.uk) and quote reference N1689).*

*We encourage NHS and voluntary sector organisations to use text from this leaflet in their own information about reducing the risk of venous thromboembolism after hip or knee replacement surgery in adults.*