What is dabigatran (Pradaxa)?
A new anticoagulant (“blood thinner”) that reduces the risk of stroke (blood clot in the brain) in patients with irregular heart rhythm called atrial fibrillation. It is also approved to decrease the risk of a blood clot after knee or hip surgery or to treat and decrease the risk for a second clot in people who have already had a blood clot(s) in their leg (DVT) or lungs (PE). It works by lowering the chance of forming blood clots in your body.

What are the symptoms of a stroke?
- Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm, or leg, especially on one side of the body
- Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- Sudden dizziness, trouble walking, loss of balance or coordination
- Sudden, severe headache with no known cause

“Learn to recognize a stroke, because time lost is brain lost!
~American Stroke Association

What are the symptoms of a DVT (deep vein thrombosis)?
- Swelling, usually in one leg
- Leg pain or tenderness
- Reddish or bluish skin discoloration
- Leg warm to touch

What are the symptoms of a PE (pulmonary embolism)?
- Chest pain in any area of the chest, front or back, upper or lower,
- Dramatic and sudden shortness of breath
- Increased breathing rate
- Unexplained back or shoulder pain

Seek immediate medical attention if you notice any of these symptoms, even if they seem to fluctuate or disappear!
How do I take dabigatran?

The dose of this medicine will be different for different patients. Follow the instructions provided by the anticoagulation clinic or the directions on the label.

No dietary restrictions or special diet required

- 1 capsule **TWICE** a day
- Swallow capsule whole and do **NOT** open, break, or chew the capsule
- Can be taken with or without food
- Store capsules in the original bottle that they came in to protect from moisture
- Do **NOT** put them in a pill box

What if I miss a dose?

- Take your missed dose as soon as you remember
- Skip the missed dose if it is less than 6 hours before your next dose is due
- Never take 2 doses together to make up for a missed dose
- It is **VERY** important not to miss doses because this increases your risk of having a stroke

What if I run out of dabigatran?

- Be sure to get your prescription refilled early enough, so you never run out of dabigatran. Skipping or stopping your medicine may increase your risk of having a DVT or PE blood clot or stroke.

Ways to request a refill:

1) Request a refill when you come in for your visit
2) Medication Refill Line:
   - 1-877-646-4550 or 407-646-4500 [24 hours/day; 7 days/week]
3) Come to the VA pharmacy to pick up a refill
4) Online at www.myhealth.va.gov
5) TeleCare – choose option 2  [8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.]

You should NEVER be without dabigatran because you “ran out”. You may always come to the VA for a partial supply if you are going to be out of dabigatran before your next refill comes in the mail.

**Please allow pharmacy at least 2 weeks to receive your refill in the mail or come to the pharmacy to pick up refill if needed sooner**
Can I stop taking dabigatran?

- Contact the anticoagulation clinic BEFORE stopping or making changes to medication therapy. Stopping dabigatran abruptly without switching to another “anticoagulant” may increase your risk of stroke or blood clots.

How to store dabigatran?

- Once bottle is opened, you must take all of the capsules within **120 days**. Keep the bottle tightly closed and store in original package to protect from moisture.

- If you have not used the capsules within **120 days**, you must dispose of the remaining capsules and start a new bottle. This is important because after 120 days, the capsules may not work as well to protect you from a stroke.

Monitoring requirements

- Dabigatran will require monitoring at **starting date and then after 2 weeks, 1 month, 3 months, and every 6 months thereafter or as clinically indicated**.

- In order to receive this medication from the VA, you **MUST** keep scheduled appointments for the required monitoring.

- At every visit we will monitor your blood count (hemoglobin, hematocrit, platelets), kidney and liver function.

What are the possible side effects?

- Most common are stomach upset (nausea, heartburn, indigestion) and bleeding or bruising.

- Risk of stomach upset is highest during first few weeks of treatment. If you experience stomach upset, try taking the capsule with food. If this does not help, talk to your provider.
Call your healthcare provider if you notice:
- Appearance of unexplained bruises or pinpoint red spots on skin without any apparent injury to area.
- Unusual bleeding from hemorrhoids.
- Bleeding for a long time after minor cuts.
- Abnormal or excessive menstrual flow (twice normal).

Go to an Emergency Room or call 911 if you experience:
- Vomiting or coughing up blood.
- Bright red or dark brown urine.
- Bright red or black “tarry” stools.
- Severe headache, dizziness or weakness.
- Severe pain, swelling, or discomfort in the stomach, abdomen, or joints.
- New or worsening nosebleeds.
- Unusual bleeding of any kind.
- Any bleeding that does not stop or is very heavy.
- If you experience a motor vehicle accident, a serious fall or head injury.

Make sure to tell your pharmacist or provider if you are having signs/symptoms of bleeding and seek immediate medical attention. Reversal of these symptoms requires hospitalization.

If your concern is NOT emergent, please call:

TeleCare Triage Phone Number
- 407-599-1404; choose nursing option (#4)
- Available 24 hours/day; 7 days/week
- Call for the following reasons:
  - Speak to nurse about health concerns
  - Call to obtain lab results
  - Have TeleCare nurse send a message to an anticoagulation pharmacist regarding questions or need to reschedule your appointment or if you will be late.
Which drugs interact with dabigatran:

- **Tell your provider** or pharmacist if you are taking any other medicines (prescription or over-the-counter), including:
  - Blood thinners
    - warfarin (Coumadin®), heparin, fondaparinux (Arixtra®), enoxaparin (Lovenox®), rivaroxaban (Xarelto®), apixaban (Eliquis®)
  - Aspirin
  - Antiplatelets
    - clopidogrel (Plavix®), prasugrel (Effient®), ticagrelor (Brillinta®)
  - Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs)
    - ibuprofen (Advil®, Motrin®), naproxen (Aleve®), celecoxib (Celebrex®)
  - St. John’s wort (*Hypericum perforatum*)
  - Antifungals
    - ketoconazole (Nizoral®), itraconazole (Onmel™, Sporanox®)
  - Medicines for HIV/AIDS
    - lopinavir/ritonavir (Kaletra®), Indinavir (Crixivan®)
  - Anticonvulsants/Antimanics
    - carbamazepine (Carbatrol®, Equetro®, Tegretol®, Epitol®)
    - phenytoin (Dilantin-125®, Dilantin®), Phenobarbital (Solfoton®)
  - Antibiotics
    - rifampin (Rifater®, Rifamate®, Rimactane®, Rifadin®)
    - clarithromycin (Biaxin®, ❑Erythromycin (Ery-tab®, Emycin®)
  - amiodarone (Cordarone®), verapamil (Calan®), quinidine, dronedarone (Multaq®)

- **Do not take** any medicines unless they have been discussed with your provider. This includes prescription or over-the-counter medicines and herbal or vitamin supplements.

What other precautions should I follow while using this drug?

- Before taking dabigatran tell your doctor if you:
  - Have ever had bleeding problems
  - Have liver or kidney problems
  - Have any other medical condition
  - Are pregnant or plan to become pregnant

- Always inform your doctors, dentist, or pharmacists that you are taking dabigatran.
  - You may need to stop dabigatran **before** an invasive procedure or surgery – let the anticoagulation clinic know if you have a procedure scheduled so
they may provide specific instructions on when to stop taking dabigatran and when to re-start.

- You may bleed and bruise more easily while you use dabigatran.
  - Avoid activities such as rough sports or other situations that could cause bruising, cuts, or serious bleeding.
  - Report any falls or blows to the head to your doctor right away. Brush and floss your teeth gently.

- Do not allow anyone else to take your medicine and carry a card in your wallet or purse that shows that you take dabigatran.

- Know the medicines you take. Keep a list of them to show your doctor and pharmacist when you get a new medicine.

Visit your Internet site at: http://www.orlando.va.gov

After hours you can contact TelCare at 1-800-645-6895

http://www.myhealth.va.gov/