

# Pradaxa

When you have, or are at risk of having blood clots form in the deep veins of your body, called deep vein thrombosis, or DVT, or if you have a heart condition called atrial fibrillation, you may be prescribed Pradaxa. You may also be familiar with its generic name, Dabigatran. Pradaxa is a high alert medication, which means if you do not take it exactly as prescribed it may cause illness or injury.

To understand how Pradaxa works, let's look at how blood clots can affect your body. When you have atrial fibrillation, blood can pool in the chambers of your heart and blood clots can form leading to a high risk of stroke. When you have DVT, blood clots can form in the deep veins of your body; usually in your legs, and can cause serious health problems.

Sometimes a clot may break away and travel through your blood vessels. Called an 'embolus', this moving clot can travel to the brain, heart or lungs and cause severe complications including stroke, heart attack, difficulty breathing, even death.

Pradaxa is an oral medication used to break up these clots and keep the blood thin. Your healthcare provider will decide how much Pradaxa you need to take, but capsules come in 75 mg, 110 mg, and 150 mg doses. Make sure you understand what dose you are supposed to take to avoid injury.

Pradaxa is a powerful medication. Some people should not take it. Do not take Pradaxa if you are allergic to any of its ingredients. Do not take Pradaxa if you have active or uncontrolled bleeding. Do not take Pradaxa if you have an artificial heart valve.

Before taking Pradaxa tell your healthcare provider if you are pregnant or planning to get pregnant, or are breastfeeding. Discuss any possible risks to your baby with your healthcare provider.

Before taking Pradaxa, tell your healthcare provider if you have a history of kidney disease or are on dialysis, stomach ulcers, or intestinal bleeding.

Let all of your healthcare providers know you are taking Pradaxa, including your dentist. You may need to stop taking your medication a few days before your appointment.

Before taking Pradaxa, give your healthcare provider a complete list of all other medications you use, including vitamins and herbal supplements like St. John's Wort.

Some over-the-counter medications you may take can increase your risk of bleeding. When taking Pradaxa avoid Aspirin, Ibuprofen like Advil or Motrin, and Naproxen like Aleve. Do not take any other oral blood thinner medications like Warfarin while taking this medication. Talk to your healthcare provider about your medication

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options.

When taking Pradaxa you may have regular tests to see how well it is working and to check for side effects. Keep all of your healthcare and lab appointments.

The most serious side effect of Pradaxa is bleeding. Be careful to avoid getting a cut or injury. If you are coughing up or vomiting blood, have urine that looks red or rusty, have red, black, or tarry

bowel movements; or have pain, swelling or discomfort in the stomach, abdomen or joints, call 911. These can be a sign of internal bleeding.

Some common side effects include nausea and upset stomach, constipation or diarrhea, heartburn and indigestion. If you do notice any of these side effects contact your healthcare provider about how to manage them.

If you require a spinal tap or spinal anesthesia called an epidural while taking Pradaxa, you are at an increased risk of developing a very serious blood clot around your spine. This can cause paralysis.

If you have an allergic reaction like trouble breathing, hives, or swelling of your face or throat, call 911.

If you have sudden leg or foot pain, purple toes or fingers, sudden dizziness, weakness or headache, shortness of breath, fast heartbeat, pale skin, yellowing of the eyes or skin, or you stop urinating, call 911 and get help immediately. This is not the complete list of side effects. Make sure you discuss all possible side effects with your healthcare provider.

Take Pradaxa exactly as prescribed. Do not change your dose. When taking Pradaxa capsules, always swallow the capsule whole with plenty of water. Do not cut, break, chew, crush or dissolve this medication.

Pradaxa is usually taken twice a day with or without food. Take your medication at the same time each day to avoid missing a dose. Try setting an alert on your phone or watch so you don't forget. If you do miss a dose, take Pradaxa as soon as possible. If it's almost time for your next dose, skip your missed dose and return to your normal medication schedule. Do not double dose. If you think you have taken too much Pradaxa, call 911.

Do not stop taking your medication without talking to your healthcare provider. If you stop taking this medication you can increase your risk of stroke and blood clots.

Store Pradaxa at room temperature away from moisture and direct sunlight. Your bathroom medicine cabinet is

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not the best place because of moisture. Do not leave your medication where it can get too hot or too cold. Always store your medication out of sight and out of reach of children to prevent accidents.

Keep Pradaxa in its original packaging, whether it's a blister pack or bottle. If it does come in a bottle, you must throw away any remaining capsules 4 months after opening the bottle.

When you are done taking Pradaxa, contact your healthcare provider or pharmacist about the proper way to dispose of any unused medications. Do not flush this medication down the toilet.

Pradaxa can reduce your risk of dangerous blood clots and stroke. But it's a powerful medication that should only be taken exactly as prescribed. If you have any questions about Pradaxa, ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist for more information.