
Anticoagulation Program

Welcome to the Anticoagulation Program! Our clinic is staffed by pharmacists and nurses with expertise in anticoagulation (blood thinner) therapy. All care occurs under doctor supervision.

Clinic visits are by appointment only. Their purpose is to monitor your blood thinner to reduce the risk of bleeding, forming a clot or having a stroke.

We will monitor your laboratory values, ensure you take the right blood thinner at the right dose, manage drug interactions and help with cost issues. How often we see you depends on why you take a blood thinner, your lab values and your risk of having side effects or adverse events. Extra phone and lab appointments will be discussed and scheduled during clinic visits.

If you cannot keep an appointment, please call to reschedule. Not keeping appointments or following instructions may lead to serious health risks for you and/or discharge from our clinic.

Because our clinic focuses on just the anticoagulation part of your care, you still must see your referring doctor at least once a year (or as directed).

Please call 864-522-3340 if you have related questions or concerns. We are available by phone weekdays from 8 a.m.–4 p.m. Calls made outside this time are returned the next business day. If you have an emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department.

We look forward to working with you!

Pharmacy Anticoagulation Clinic

Greenville office

3 Butternut Dr., Greenville, SC 29605

Greer office

340 Medical Pkwy., Greer, SC 29650

Internal Medicine office

876 W. Faris Rd.

Greenville, SC 29605

Patewood office

200 Patewood Dr., Ste. C300

Greenville, SC 29615

Simpsonville office

729 SE Main St.

Simpsonville, SC 29681

Why patients take anticoagulants and how they work

Reasons to take anticoagulants (blood thinners)

Doctors recommend patients take blood thinners for several reasons. Here are the most common:

Atrial fibrillation (AFib)

AFib causes an irregular heartbeat. Many people with AFib have no symptoms but have an increased risk of stroke. Patients with AFib take blood thinners to prevent blood clots that can lead to a stroke.

Pulmonary embolism (PE)

A PE occurs when a blood clot gets stuck in the lung. Symptoms include shortness of breath, chest pain, dizziness or fainting. Blood thinners help prevent clots that can lead to another PE. A PE can be fatal.

Deep vein thrombosis (DVT)

A DVT occurs when a blood clot lodges in a vein. The result can be reduced or blocked blood flow, which causes swelling and pain. DVTs often happen in the “deep veins” of the legs, thighs or pelvis. Blood thinners help prevent clots from forming.

How blood thinners work

Blood thinners help keep clots from forming. It takes many steps for the body to form a blood clot. Clotting factors, which are a natural part of your blood, are involved in each step.

Blood thinners work to block one or more of these factors to make your blood take longer to clot. If you already have a clot, blood thinners prevent these clots from getting larger.

How to take anticoagulants

Anticoagulants (blood thinners) start to reduce blood clotting within just a few hours after your first dose. The effects of these medications begin to wear off quickly once you stop taking them. Thus, make sure you take all doses as instructed.

Dabigatran (Pradaxa is brand name)

- Swallow whole with a full glass of water.
- Do not break, chew or open the capsule.
- Keep in original packaging (do not put in a pillbox).
- Take a missed dose up to 6 hours before the next scheduled dose.
- If it is less than 6 hours to the next dose, skip the missed dose.
- Do not double up or take extra doses to make up for a missed dose.

Apixaban (Eliquis is brand name)

- Swallow whole with or without food.
- Tablets may be crushed and mixed in apple juice, water or applesauce if taken within 4 hours of crushing them.
- Tablets may be crushed and mixed in 60 mL of water and given via nasogastric tube if within 4 hours of crushing them.
- Take a missed dose as soon as possible the same day.
- Do not double up or take extra doses to make up for a missed dose.

Rivaroxaban (Xarelto is brand name)

- Take rivaroxaban 10 mg with or without food.
- Take rivaroxaban 15 mg or 20 mg with food.
- Tablets may be crushed and mixed with applesauce if given within 4 hours of crushing them and followed by a meal.
- Tablets may be crushed and mixed in 50 mL of water and given via nasogastric tube or gastric tube. Follow with tube feeding into the stomach or small bowel.
- If taken once a day:
 - Take a missed dose as soon as possible the same day.
 - Do not double up or take extra doses to make up for a missed dose.
 - Resume regular dosing schedule the next day.
- If taken twice a day:
 - Take a missed dose as soon as possible the same day.
 - Resume regular dosing schedule the next day.

Edoxaban (Savaysa is brand name)

- Take once a day and swallow whole with or without food.
- Do not break, crush or chew the tablet.
- Take a missed dose as soon as possible the same day.
- Do not double up or take extra doses to make up for a missed dose.
- Resume regular dosing schedule the next day.

Signs and symptoms of clotting and bleeding

Anticoagulants (blood thinners) are commonly used to treat or prevent blood clots. Although these medications lower the risk of clotting, they do not completely take away the risk. For example, if you stop taking your medication or miss a dose, your risk of clotting will increase.

Please watch for the following signs so that you can get care quickly if clotting occurs.

Signs and symptoms of a blood clot

A clot can cause lasting damage or death if not treated. Clots can form in veins, arteries or the lungs.

Go to the closest Emergency Department at once if you have:

- Shortness of breath
- Sharp chest pain
- Redness, swelling, heat or pain in any limb
- Discoloration (blue/purple), coldness or pain in any limb

Signs and symptoms of a stroke

A stroke occurs when a clot blocks the flow of blood to the brain. Seek help right away to reduce brain damage. Strokes can be fatal.

Call 911 at once if you have:

- Ongoing dizziness, sudden vision changes or a sudden, severe headache
- Sudden numbness or weakness on one side of the body
- Slurred speech or difficulty speaking
- Facial drooping

Act F-A-S-T to recognize the warning signs of stroke:

- FACE: Ask the person to smile. Does one side of the face droop?
- ARMS: Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one arm drift downward?
- SPEECH: Ask the person to repeat a simple phrase. Is the speech slurred or strange?
- TIME: If you see any of these signs, call 911 right away.

Because blood thinners increase the time it takes to form a clot, it may put you at risk for severe bleeding. For instance, if you take extra doses by mistake, your risk of bleeding will rise. Please watch for these signs so that you can get care quickly if bleeding occurs.

Signs and symptoms of bleeding

Call your doctor at once if you have:

- Bright red blood in your stool
- Blood in your urine (red or brown colored)
- Uncontrolled bleeding from your nose or gums
- Cuts that will not stop bleeding
- Heavy menstrual bleeding (changing a sanitary napkin or tampon within two hours)
- Bad bruising (bruises that seem to pool under the skin or grow bigger in size)

Go to the closest Emergency Department at once if you have:

- Dark, tarry stools
- Blood while coughing or vomiting (red or resembling coffee grounds)
- A hard fall or hit to the head
- Any type of accident, especially one with a vehicle (car, motorcycle, bicycle, boat)

Possible side effects of anticoagulants (blood thinners)

Contact your doctor or the Pharmacy Anticoagulation Clinic if you have any of these symptoms:

Dabigatran (Pradaxa is brand name)

- Upset stomach, heartburn or nausea
- Stomach pain
- Acid reflux or indigestion

Rivaroxaban (Xarelto is brand name)

- Itching, rash
- Stomach pain or discomfort
- Muscle pain or weakness
- Dizziness and/or fainting

Apixaban (Eliquis is brand name)

- Swelling as an allergic reaction
- Rash
- Itching
- Dizziness and/or fainting
- Upset stomach or nausea

Edoxaban (Savaysa is brand name)

- Rash
- Low red blood cell count (anemia)

For all medications, get medical help at once if you have these signs of an allergic reaction:

- Rash, hives or itching; red, swollen, blistered or peeling skin
- Wheezing, chest tightness or trouble breathing
- Swelling of the mouth, face, lips, tongue or throat

Lab monitoring if you take direct oral anticoagulants

Direct oral anticoagulants (Eliquis, Xarelto, Pradaxa and Savaysa are brand names) do not require monthly blood checks like warfarin, the traditional blood thinner. However, they require other types of lab monitoring throughout the year.

These lab values will be monitored during the year:

Hemoglobin, hematocrit and platelets

These labs are tested to monitor for bleeding.

Serum creatinine

The dose of your blood thinner is based on many factors. Kidney function is one of them. This lab test tells us your kidney function and helps us make sure your medication dose is correct.

Bilirubin, ALT, AST, albumin, PT, INR

These lab tests tell us about your liver function. Changes in liver function can affect your risk of bleeding. These labs also help decide what dose you should take.

Your body weight

Your medication dose also is based on your weight. Thus, it is important to monitor you for any weight changes.

Possible interactions with anticoagulants (blood thinners)

Your doctor has ordered you to take what is called a direct oral anticoagulant (DOAC). Examples of DOACs are the brand names Eliquis, Xarelto, Pradaxa and Savaysa.

These blood thinners have standard doses and often do not require dose adjustment. However, certain medications may interact with your blood thinner and increase your risk of side effects, clotting or bleeding. To decrease these risks, your blood thinner medication or blood thinner dose may need to be changed.

If you take these medications, discuss possible blood thinner adjustments with your doctor or pharmacist:

- Dronedarone
- Verapamil
- Amiodarone
- Ketoconazole
- Clarithromycin
- Rifampin
- Phenytoin
- Phenobarbital
- Carbamazepine

NOTE: This list is not complete. Please check with your doctor, pharmacist or the Pharmacy Anticoagulation Clinic before you start new medications.

BEFORE taking these medications, discuss possible risks with your pharmacist:

- Anti-platelets
- Over-the-counter medications or herbal supplements
- Pepto-Bismol, Goody's Powder, Alka-Seltzer and Excedrin (some formulas contain aspirin or aspirin-type ingredients)
- NSAIDs (aspirin-type medications), which can increase your risk of bleeding, hurt your heart and harm your kidneys; 81-mg aspirin tablets may be OK if approved by your doctors

What if you need NSAIDs?

The list below ranks NSAIDs from least (#1) to greatest (#10) risk of causing bleeding. If you need NSAIDs, choose one with less risk (like ibuprofen), take the lowest dose possible and for the shortest time.

1. Celebrex
2. Ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin)
3. Diclofenac (Volteran)
4. Meloxicam (Mobic)
5. Indomethacin (Indocin)
6. Ketoprofen
7. Naproxen (Aleve)
8. Piroxicam
9. Ketorlac

Here's how you can decrease possible interactions:

- Ask your doctor about any interactions with new medications and blood thinners.
- Fill your prescriptions at one pharmacy so that possible interactions can be spotted more easily.

Lifestyle factors and anticoagulants

Blood pressure

Having uncontrolled high blood pressure can increase your risk of stroke. That's why it's important to take all your blood pressure medications and have regular follow-up visits with your doctor. You also can check your blood pressure at home or at the pharmacy.

Smoking

Smoking increases your risk of having a clot or stroke. If you smoke or use tobacco, consider talking to your doctor about how to quit.

Alcohol

Alcohol can increase the risk of bleeding and injury. Please limit alcohol use to two servings per 24 hours.

- Beer or malt beverage (1 serving = 12 oz)
- Wine (1 serving = 4 oz)
- Liquor or spirits (1 serving = 1.5 oz)

Surgery or medical procedures while on anticoagulants

Tell all your health care providers (nurses, doctors, dentists, etc.) as soon as you start taking anticoagulants (blood thinners). Being on blood thinners could change your treatment plan.

If you need surgery, a procedure or an injection (such as a steroid for pain), contact the Pharmacy Anticoagulation Clinic as soon as possible, even if the event is not yet scheduled.

Our clinicians will work with your doctors to determine the best way to manage your blood thinner around the time of the procedure. Once the plan is decided, the Pharmacy Anticoagulation Clinic will provide you exact instructions.

Surgery or medical procedure timeline

1. Surgery or medical procedure is discussed.
2. Notify the Pharmacy Anticoagulation Clinic at least seven days ahead of time of your surgery or procedure.
3. Clinicians will work with your doctors to determine a treatment plan.
4. Clinicians will notify you of the plan and schedule a follow-up appointment.

When must I call the clinic?

Pharmacy Anticoagulation Clinic

Although direct oral anticoagulants – such as Eliquis, Xarelto, Pradaxa and Savaysa – do not need to be monitored monthly, certain changes to your medications or health may affect your blood thinner. It is important to know when to contact the clinic to decrease your risk of side effects and other risks.

When to call the clinic:

- Starting a medicine listed on the handout “Possible interactions with anticoagulants (blood thinners)”
- Starting a new herbal supplement
- Being admitted to the hospital
- Going to the emergency room
- Having signs of severe bleeding or clotting that caused you to go to the emergency room or call your doctor
- Scheduling an invasive procedure in the next few months (dental, surgical, etc.)
- Missing multiple doses of your blood thinner
- Having questions about how to take your blood thinner
- Needing a new prescription for your blood thinner

Calling the clinic about these changes will help keep you safe from bad effects of this drug. Please call us at **864-522-3340** with any questions or concerns about your blood thinner.