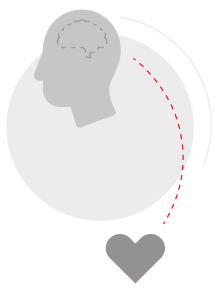


# TAKING MEDICINE TO PREVENT STROKE

*It's a no-brainer!*



**An irregular heartbeat known as atrial fibrillation can cause blood clots and increase the risk of stroke five-fold.**



Atrial fibrillation (AF) causes the upper chambers of the heart to quiver and beat out of rhythm with the rest of the heart. This means blood may become trapped in the heart chambers and form a clot, which can block the supply of blood to the brain, causing a stroke.

People with AF are at higher risk of stroke, especially if they:

- Are 65 years or older
- Have high blood pressure
- Have type 2 diabetes
- Have heart failure
- Have had a previous stroke
- Have heart disease



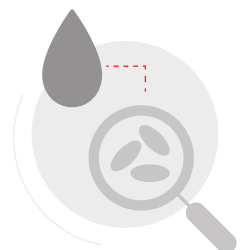
**Early diagnosis and appropriate use of stroke prevention therapy are essential.**



**Anticoagulant medicine helps prevent blood clots and reduce the risk of stroke by up to 70%.**

Anticoagulants are prescribed to help prevent blood clots and reduce stroke risk. They do not affect the symptoms of AF.

Sometimes called 'blood thinners', anticoagulants do not actually 'thin' the blood – they simply make blood cells less 'sticky' so they don't clump together to form a clot.



There are four anticoagulants commonly used by people with AF: Warfarin, Eliquis, Pradaxa and Xarelto. They are subsidised on the PBS and need to be taken on an ongoing basis to reduce the risk of stroke.



**Do not stop taking an anticoagulant without consulting a doctor.**

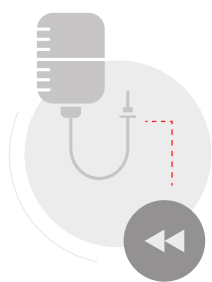
millions 

**Anticoagulants have been used safely by millions of people, with stroke prevention benefits far outweighing the risk of side effects, including bleeding.**



All medicines have side-effects. Anticoagulants make people more prone to bruising, the odd nosebleed and on extremely rare occasions, they may contribute to serious internal bleeding.

It is important to remember that serious bleeding is rare and that the stroke prevention benefits of these medicines far outweigh the risk of side-effects.



Doctors can stop the anti-clotting effect of these medicines if required. Some anticoagulants have specific 'reversal' therapies that can quickly stop their effect. Doctors can explain more about the potential need for reversal.

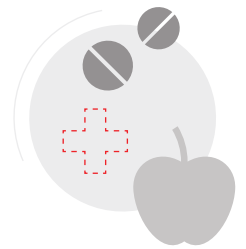
you 

**Have you done all you can to prevent stroke?**

Hearts4heart wants to ensure all Australians with AF are protected against stroke.

In addition to taking anticoagulation therapy, people with AF should:

- Control blood pressure, diabetes and/or cholesterol
- Increase physical activity and reduce excess weight
- Stop smoking
- Reduce alcohol intake
- Treat sleep apnoea




People with AF can also take charge of their health by:

- Preparing a list of questions for their doctor
- Recording any side-effects or symptoms
- Using reputable sources for research
- Asking their doctor if the medicines they have been prescribed are still appropriate



**Hearts4heart supports, educates and advocates for Australians living with atrial fibrillation and other heart conditions. Join our community and the conversation.**

 [hearts4heart.org.au](https://hearts4heart.org.au)

 [facebook.com/hearts4heart/](https://facebook.com/hearts4heart/)

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