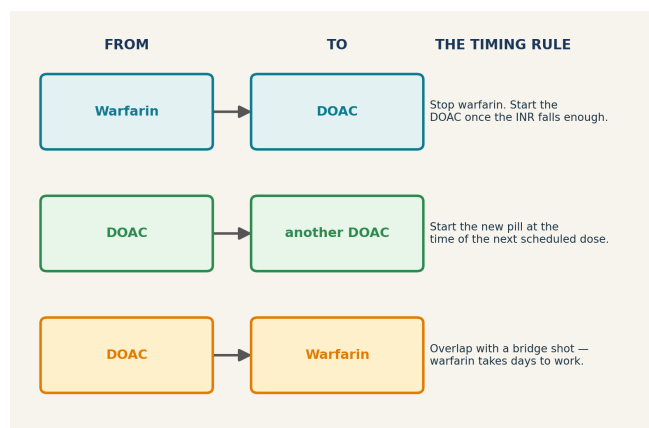


Switching Blood Thinners (DOACs)

How to change from one blood thinner to another safely

Timing is everything. Never double up, never skip, never switch on your own.



Online: <https://go.riasalimd.com/doac-switch-guide>

Rias KS Ali, MD FACC

Board Certified in Interventional Cardiology & Cardiovascular Disease

4740 Mile Stretch Drive, Holiday FL 34690 | Office: (727) 943-5200 | Fax: (727) 943-5201 | RiasAliMD.com

Last Updated: August 2026



Visit
RiasAliMD.com

This guide is educational only. Always follow your doctor's specific recommendations.
4740 Mile Stretch Drive, Holiday FL 34690 | Office: (727) 943-5200 | Fax: (727) 943-5201 | RiasAliMD.com
Online: <https://go.riasalimd.com/doac-switch-guide>

1 of 19 | Page



Save
Contact Info

Names & Terms You Will Hear

Term	Meaning
DOAC	Direct oral anticoagulant — the newer blood thinners taken as a pill that need no routine blood test.
NOAC	An older name for the same drugs (novel oral anticoagulant). DOAC and NOAC mean the same thing.
Apixaban (Eliquis)	A common DOAC taken twice a day. Often a first choice when bleeding risk is a concern.
Rivaroxaban (Xarelto)	A DOAC taken once a day for most uses. The higher doses must be taken with food.
Dabigatran (Pradaxa)	A DOAC taken twice a day. It is the one that can be removed by dialysis in an emergency.
Edoxaban (Savaysa)	A once-a-day DOAC. It is not used when kidney function is very high or very low.
Warfarin (Coumadin)	The older blood thinner that needs regular INR blood tests and takes days to start working.
INR	International Normalized Ratio — the blood test that shows how thin warfarin has made the blood.
Bridge	A short-acting shot (low-molecular-weight heparin) used to cover the gap while warfarin is still building up.



Visit
RiasAliMD.com

This guide is educational only. Always follow your doctor's specific recommendations.
4740 Mile Stretch Drive, Holiday FL 34690 | Office: (727) 943-5200 | Fax: (727) 943-5201 | RiasAliMD.com
Online: <https://go.riasalimd.com/doac-switch-guide>



Save
Contact Info

Switching Blood Thinners (DOACs)?

- Switching a blood thinner means moving from one anticoagulant to another. It is common and safe when the timing is planned by your care team.
- The four DOACs we use most are apixaban (Eliquis), rivaroxaban (Xarelto), dabigatran (Pradaxa), and edoxaban (Savaysa). All four prevent clots by blocking one step in the clotting cascade.
- The danger in a switch is the gap. If both drugs are off at the same time, a clot or stroke can form. If both are on at the same time, bleeding risk goes up. The plan keeps you in the safe middle.
- There are three switch paths, and each has its own timing rule: warfarin to a DOAC, one DOAC to another, and a DOAC to warfarin.
- Your kidneys clear these drugs, so a change in kidney function is one of the most common reasons we change the drug or the dose.
- A switch is always planned with your dose, your kidney number, and your reason for the switch in mind. It is never something to start on your own.



Visit
RiasAliMD.com

This guide is educational only. Always follow your doctor's specific recommendations.
4740 Mile Stretch Drive, Holiday FL 34690 | Office: (727) 943-5200 | Fax: (727) 943-5201 | RiasAliMD.com
Online: <https://go.riasalimd.com/doac-switch-guide>



Save
Contact Info

The Three Switch Paths — From, To, and When

Switching From	Switching To	How and When
Warfarin (Coumadin)	A DOAC (Eliquis, Xarelto, Pradaxa, Savaysa)	Stop warfarin. Start the DOAC once the INR blood test has fallen into a safe range (usually below 2.0).
A DOAC	Another DOAC	Simplest switch. Stop the old pill and take the first new dose at the time the next scheduled dose was due.
A DOAC	Warfarin (Coumadin)	Overlap. Start warfarin plus a fast bridge shot (or keep the DOAC by a planned rule) until the INR shows warfarin has taken over.

At a Glance — The Four Common DOACs

Apixaban	Rivaroxaban	Dabigatran / Edoxaban
• Brand: Eliquis • Taken twice a day • With or without food • Often chosen for lower bleeding risk	• Brand: Xarelto • Once a day for most uses • Higher doses need food • Simple once-daily schedule	• Brands: Pradaxa / Savaysa • Pradaxa twice a day • Savaysa once a day • Kidney function guides both



Visit
RiasAliMD.com

This guide is educational only. Always follow your doctor's specific recommendations.
 4740 Mile Stretch Drive, Holiday FL 34690 | Office: (727) 943-5200 | Fax: (727) 943-5201 | RiasAliMD.com
 Online: <https://go.riasalimd.com/doac-switch-guide>



Save
Contact Info

Why It Matters

- The right blood thinner for you can change over time. Picking the wrong moment to switch can leave you unprotected from a clot or at higher risk of bleeding.
- Kidney function drifts with age and illness. Some DOACs need a lower dose, or a different drug, when the kidneys slow down.
- If you have bleeding or heavy bruising, we may switch to a thinner with a gentler bleeding profile, such as moving to apixaban.
- Cost and insurance coverage are real reasons to switch. A drug you can actually afford and take every day protects you better than one you skip.
- Some people do better on a once-a-day pill, and others on twice a day. Matching the schedule to your life improves how reliably you take it.
- A new medicine, like certain antifungals, seizure drugs, or HIV drugs, can clash with a DOAC and force a change. An upcoming surgery can also call for a planned hold or switch.

Common Reasons We Switch a Blood Thinner

Kidney function changed

Bleeding or bruising

Cost or insurance

Once vs twice daily

A drug interaction

An upcoming procedure

A switch is a planned decision, not a random one. These are the reasons we most often change a blood thinner or its dose.

Never change a blood thinner on your own. Do not stop, start, double up, or switch brands without calling us first. The danger is the timing: too much overlap causes bleeding, and any gap lets a clot or stroke form. A safe switch is always planned around your dose, your kidney number, and your reason for the change.



Visit
RiasAliMD.com

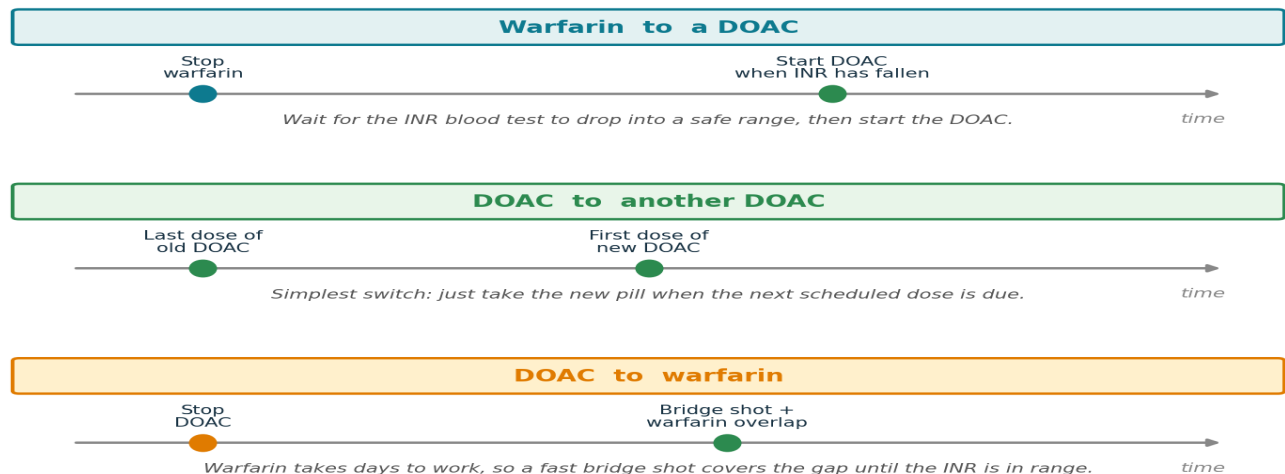
This guide is educational only. Always follow your doctor's specific recommendations.
4740 Mile Stretch Drive, Holiday FL 34690 | Office: (727) 943-5200 | Fax: (727) 943-5201 | RiasAliMD.com
Online: <https://go.riasalimd.com/doac-switch-guide>



Save
Contact Info

Treatment Options

- Warfarin to a DOAC: stop the warfarin, then start the DOAC once your INR blood test has fallen into a safe range (usually below 2.0). Starting too early stacks two thinners; starting too late leaves a clot gap.
- DOAC to another DOAC: this is the simplest switch. Stop the old pill and take the first dose of the new one at the time your next scheduled dose would have been due.
- DOAC to warfarin: warfarin takes several days to work, so we overlap. We start warfarin and add a fast-acting bridge shot (or keep the DOAC by a planned rule) until the INR shows the warfarin has taken over.
- Kidney-based dosing: your kidney number (often called CrCl or eGFR) helps pick both the drug and the dose. We may check it before and after a switch.
- Food rule: the higher doses of rivaroxaban (Xarelto) must be taken with food to absorb well. Apixaban, dabigatran, and edoxaban can be taken with or without food.
- Drug check: before a switch we review every medicine and supplement you take, because strong interacting drugs change how much thinner is really in your blood.
- The golden rules of any switch: never double up two thinners on your own, never skip doses to bridge a gap yourself, and never switch brands or doses without calling us first.



The three switch paths. The green dot is when the new drug starts. The plan keeps you protected without ever stacking two thinners or leaving a gap.



Visit
RiasAliMD.com

This guide is educational only. Always follow your doctor's specific recommendations.
4740 Mile Stretch Drive, Holiday FL 34690 | Office: (727) 943-5200 | Fax: (727) 943-5201 | RiasAliMD.com
Online: <https://go.riasalimd.com/doac-switch-guide>



Save
Contact Info

Switching From Warfarin to a DOAC

- Warfarin stays in your body for a while, so we do not start the DOAC the same minute warfarin stops.
- We stop the warfarin and check your INR blood test. The INR shows how thin the warfarin has made your blood.
- Once the INR falls into a safe range, usually below 2.0, we start the DOAC. This avoids stacking two thinners at once.
- Starting the DOAC too early raises bleeding risk; starting too late leaves a gap where a clot could form. The INR test sets the right moment.
- This switch trades weekly INR tests for a fixed pill with fewer food and drug interactions.



Visit
RiasAliMD.com

This guide is educational only. Always follow your doctor's specific recommendations.
4740 Mile Stretch Drive, Holiday FL 34690 | Office: (727) 943-5200 | Fax: (727) 943-5201 | RiasAliMD.com
Online: <https://go.riasalimd.com/doac-switch-guide>



Save
Contact Info

Switching From One DOAC to Another

- This is the simplest switch because both drugs are short-acting and need no INR test.
- Take the last dose of the old DOAC on its normal schedule.
- Take the first dose of the new DOAC at the time the next scheduled dose would have been due.
- Do not take both at once, and do not leave an extra gap. The new pill simply steps into the old pill's place.
- We may still adjust the dose for your kidney function or the specific drug, so confirm the exact dose with us.



Visit
RiasAliMD.com

This guide is educational only. Always follow your doctor's specific recommendations.
4740 Mile Stretch Drive, Holiday FL 34690 | Office: (727) 943-5200 | Fax: (727) 943-5201 | RiasAliMD.com
Online: <https://go.riasalimd.com/doac-switch-guide>



Save
Contact Info

Switching From a DOAC to Warfarin

- Warfarin is slow to start. It takes several days of pills before the INR reaches a protective level.
- Because of that delay, we overlap so you are never left unprotected during the wait.
- Often we start warfarin together with a fast-acting bridge shot (low-molecular-weight heparin) that covers the gap right away.
- We check the INR over the next days. Once it reaches the target range, we stop the bridge shot and the DOAC by a planned rule.
- This is the one switch with a deliberate overlap, and even then it follows a specific plan, not guesswork.



Visit
RiasAliMD.com

This guide is educational only. Always follow your doctor's specific recommendations.
4740 Mile Stretch Drive, Holiday FL 34690 | Office: (727) 943-5200 | Fax: (727) 943-5201 | RiasAliMD.com
Online: <https://go.riasalimd.com/doac-switch-guide>



Save
Contact Info

Comfort Measures at Home (No Medication Needed)

These simple steps support healing and ease symptoms. Use them alongside any medication your doctor prescribes.

- Keep one current medicine list with the exact name, dose, and times of your blood thinner. Update it the day a switch happens.
- Use a pill organizer or a phone alarm so the switch day is clear — the old pill stops and the new pill starts on the right schedule.
- Carry or wear medical alert identification that names your blood thinner. After a switch, change it to the new drug.
- Fill the new prescription before the switch day so there is no gap waiting at the pharmacy.
- Tell every doctor, dentist, and pharmacist about the switch so no one restarts the old drug by mistake.
- Write down the date and time of your last dose of the old drug and your first dose of the new one, and bring it to your next visit.



Visit
RiasAliMD.com

This guide is educational only. Always follow your doctor's specific recommendations.
4740 Mile Stretch Drive, Holiday FL 34690 | Office: (727) 943-5200 | Fax: (727) 943-5201 | RiasAliMD.com
Online: <https://go.riasalimd.com/doac-switch-guide>



Save
Contact Info

Risks, Benefits, and Alternatives

Every choice has trade-offs. Use this table to start the shared decision conversation.

Option	Risks	Benefits	Alternatives
Switch to a different DOAC	A short gap in protection if the timing is off. Out-of-pocket cost may change. The new drug has its own dosing rules to learn.	Can fix a bleeding, cost, kidney, or schedule problem. No INR blood tests. The switch itself is simple — just start at the next dose.	Stay on the current DOAC. Switch to warfarin. Adjust the dose of the current drug instead of changing it.
Switch from warfarin to a DOAC	Must wait for the INR to fall before starting, which takes timing and a blood test. No easy lab test to check the DOAC level later.	No more weekly INR tests. Fewer food and drug interactions. Steadier day-to-day protection.	Stay on warfarin (needed for mechanical valves). Improve INR control instead of switching.
Switch from a DOAC to warfarin	Needs an overlap and often a bridge shot, since warfarin takes days to work. Brings back regular INR tests.	May be needed for a mechanical heart valve, severe kidney disease, or cost. Warfarin has two proven reversal options.	Stay on the DOAC if it is safe and affordable. Use a different DOAC instead.
Stop a thinner without a plan	The most dangerous choice. The clot and stroke risk the drug was preventing comes back, and it peaks in the first weeks.	None that outweigh the risk. There is no safe do-it-yourself version of a switch.	Any planned switch above, made with your care team, is far safer than stopping on your own.



Visit
RiasAliMD.com

This guide is educational only. Always follow your doctor's specific recommendations.
4740 Mile Stretch Drive, Holiday FL 34690 | Office: (727) 943-5200 | Fax: (727) 943-5201 | RiasAliMD.com
Online: <https://go.riasalimd.com/doac-switch-guide>



Save
Contact Info

Common Misconceptions

Myth	Reality
All blood thinners are the same, so I can swap brands when one runs out.	They are not interchangeable. Each DOAC has its own dose, schedule, and kidney rules, and warfarin works in a completely different way. A switch must be planned, never improvised at the pharmacy.
To be safe during a switch, I should take both thinners for a few days.	Doubling up two anticoagulants raises bleeding risk sharply. The only planned overlap is when starting warfarin, and even that is done by a specific rule, not by guessing.
If I miss the switch and have a gap, I can take a double dose to catch up.	Never double-dose to make up a gap. That spikes the drug level and the bleeding risk. Call us instead — we will tell you exactly when to take the next dose.
Switching from warfarin to a DOAC means I can start the new pill right away.	Not quite. We wait until your INR blood test has fallen into a safe range, usually below 2.0. Starting too soon stacks two thinners on top of each other.
A DOAC to warfarin switch is just stop one pill and start the other.	Warfarin takes several days to reach a protective level. That is why we overlap with a fast bridge shot or a planned rule, so you are never left unprotected.
My kidneys have nothing to do with which blood thinner I take.	Your kidneys clear these drugs. A drop in kidney function can mean a lower dose or a different drug, which is one of the most common reasons we switch.
Once I switch, I do not need to tell my other doctors.	Every provider needs the update. A surgeon, dentist, or urgent care that does not know your current thinner can plan the wrong hold time or restart the wrong drug.



Visit
RiasAliMD.com

This guide is educational only. Always follow your doctor's specific recommendations.
4740 Mile Stretch Drive, Holiday FL 34690 | Office: (727) 943-5200 | Fax: (727) 943-5201 | RiasAliMD.com
Online: <https://go.riasalimd.com/doac-switch-guide>



Save
Contact Info

Possible Complications

Knowing what can go wrong helps you spot problems early. Most complications are uncommon, especially with treatment.

Where / What	What Can Happen
Clot or stroke from a gap in coverage	If both drugs are off at the same time, the blood can clot. This is the main reason the switch timing matters, and why you should never create a gap on your own.
Bleeding from too much overlap	If two thinners are active at once, or a double dose is taken, bleeding risk climbs. Planned switches avoid this by stopping one drug as the other takes over.
Wrong dose for the kidneys	A DOAC dose that fit your old kidney function may be too high or too low after a change. We recheck the kidney number around a switch to keep the dose right.
Drug interaction after a switch	Starting a strong interacting medicine (some antifungals, seizure drugs, or HIV drugs) can raise or lower the thinner in your blood. Always tell us about every new prescription.
Confusion about which pill to take	A switch can be confusing if the old pills are still in the cabinet. Remove or clearly label the old bottle so you do not take the wrong drug.



Visit
RiasAliMD.com

This guide is educational only. Always follow your doctor's specific recommendations.
4740 Mile Stretch Drive, Holiday FL 34690 | Office: (727) 943-5200 | Fax: (727) 943-5201 | RiasAliMD.com
Online: <https://go.riasalimd.com/doac-switch-guide>



Save
Contact Info

Points to Know

If you remember nothing else, remember these key points.

- There are three switch paths, each with its own timing rule. The plan keeps you protected without doubling up.
- Warfarin to a DOAC: start the DOAC once the INR has fallen into a safe range, usually below 2.0.
- DOAC to DOAC: the simplest switch — start the new pill at the time of the next scheduled dose.
- DOAC to warfarin: overlap with a bridge shot, because warfarin takes days to reach a protective level.
- The higher doses of rivaroxaban (Xarelto) must be taken with food; the other DOACs can be taken with or without food.
- Your kidney function helps decide both the drug and the dose, so we may check it before and after a switch.
- The golden rules: never double up, never skip, and never switch a blood thinner on your own.



Visit
RiasAliMD.com

This guide is educational only. Always follow your doctor's specific recommendations.
4740 Mile Stretch Drive, Holiday FL 34690 | Office: (727) 943-5200 | Fax: (727) 943-5201 | RiasAliMD.com
Online: <https://go.riasalimd.com/doac-switch-guide>



Save
Contact Info

When to Call Us - and When to Call 911

If you are not sure, call. We would rather hear from you twice than miss a real problem.

- You are unsure which pill to take or when to take it during a switch — call us before the next dose, not after.
- You missed a dose around the switch day — call us; do not double up to catch up.
- Unusual or heavy bleeding that will not stop — call 911 if it is severe.
- Black or tarry stools, vomiting blood, or coughing up blood — go to the ER now.
- Pink, red, or brown urine, or a lot of bruising you cannot explain — call us today.
- Sudden weakness, trouble speaking, vision change, or a severe headache — call 911 (possible stroke).
- A new medicine or supplement was started by another doctor while you are on a thinner — call us to check for an interaction.
- A surgery, procedure, or dental work is coming up — call us in advance so we can plan the hold or switch.

Office: (727) 943-5200

See our companion guides. For the two DOACs we use most, read [our Eliquis \(apixaban\) guide](#) and [our Xarelto \(rivaroxaban\) guide](#). For warfarin and the INR test, see [our warfarin and INR guide](#). For the bridge shot, see [our bridging guide](#), and for what happens if you bleed, see [our reversal guide](#).



Visit
RiasAliMD.com

This guide is educational only. Always follow your doctor's specific recommendations.
4740 Mile Stretch Drive, Holiday FL 34690 | Office: (727) 943-5200 | Fax: (727) 943-5201 | RiasAliMD.com
Online: <https://go.riasalimd.com/doac-switch-guide>



Save
Contact Info

Trusted Resources

The links below are the trusted resources Dr. Ali used to write this guide and that he recommends you visit for more information. Each is a clickable link in the digital version and a Short.io tracked URL on the printed version.

- [Cleveland Clinic — Anticoagulants \(Blood Thinners\)](#) - Plain-language overview of the DOACs, how they work, and bleeding safety.
- [American Heart Association — Anticoagulant and Antiplatelet Drugs](#) - AHA patient page on blood thinners and how to take them safely.
- [MedlinePlus — Taking Blood Thinners Safely](#) - NIH plain-language instructions for living safely on a blood thinner.
- [National Blood Clot Alliance — Stop the Clot](#) - Patient advocacy and education on clots, blood thinners, and safety.



Visit
RiasAliMD.com

This guide is educational only. Always follow your doctor's specific recommendations.
4740 Mile Stretch Drive, Holiday FL 34690 | Office: (727) 943-5200 | Fax: (727) 943-5201 | RiasAliMD.com
Online: <https://go.riasalimd.com/doac-switch-guide>



Save
Contact Info

Sources Used to Build This Guide

Every recommendation in this guide is grounded in one or more of the studies, guidelines, or trusted resources below. Short links are tracked so Dr. Ali can see which references patients are reading; nothing personally identifying is captured.

- [Cleveland Clinic — Anticoagulants \(DOACs\)](#) [Patient-Education]
Plain-language overview of the DOACs and switching considerations
- [AHA — Anticoagulant and Antiplatelet Drugs](#) [Patient-Education]
Overview of DOAC therapy and patient safety
- [MedlinePlus — Apixaban](#) [Patient-Education]
Reference drug information for apixaban (Eliquis) switching and dosing
- [MedlinePlus — Rivaroxaban](#) [Patient-Education]
Reference drug information for rivaroxaban (Xarelto), including the food requirement at higher doses
- [MedlinePlus — Taking Blood Thinners Safely](#) [Patient-Education]
NIH plain-language instructions on safe blood-thinner use during transitions
- [2023 ACC/AHA/ACCP/HRS Atrial Fibrillation Guideline — Anticoagulation](#) [Guideline]
Guideline guidance on anticoagulant selection and transitions in atrial fibrillation
- [Eliquis \(apixaban\) FDA Prescribing Information](#) [Drug-Label]
FDA label switching instructions: warfarin to apixaban when INR is below 2.0, and apixaban to warfarin with a parenteral bridge
- [Xarelto \(rivaroxaban\) FDA Prescribing Information](#) [Drug-Label]
FDA label switching and food-with-dose instructions for rivaroxaban
- [Pradaxa \(dabigatran\) FDA Prescribing Information](#) [Drug-Label]
FDA label switching and renal-dosing instructions for dabigatran, including dialysis removal
- [Savaysa \(edoxaban\) FDA Prescribing Information](#) [Drug-Label]
FDA label switching instructions and the renal-function boundaries for edoxaban use
- [CHEST Antithrombotic Therapy for VTE Disease \(Guideline and Expert Panel Report\)](#) [Guideline]
CHEST guidance on anticoagulant choice and transitions in venous thromboembolism
- [National Blood Clot Alliance — Stop the Clot](#) [Patient-Education]
Patient advocacy and education on clots, blood thinners, and switching safety



Visit
RiasAliMD.com

This guide is educational only. Always follow your doctor's specific recommendations.
4740 Mile Stretch Drive, Holiday FL 34690 | Office: (727) 943-5200 | Fax: (727) 943-5201 | RiasAliMD.com
Online: <https://go.riasalimd.com/doac-switch-guide>



Save
Contact Info

About This Guide

Rias KS Ali, MD FACC | Board Certified in Interventional Cardiology & Cardiovascular Disease

4740 Mile Stretch Drive, Holiday FL 34690 | Office: (727) 943-5200 | Fax: (727) 943-5201 | RiasAliMD.com

Version: 2026-08-15

Reviewer note: Reviewed against Cleveland Clinic anticoagulant page, the AHA blood thinner overview, and MedlinePlus drug pages. Ours adds: a plain-words timeline for each of the three switch paths, a from-to-when comparison table, the reason a DOAC-to-warfarin switch needs a bridge shot, and the kidney-function and food rules that decide the dose.

Disclaimer

This guide is for educational purposes only and does not replace medical advice from your physician. Recommendations may not apply to every patient. Always follow the specific instructions of Dr. Ali and your care team. In an emergency call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department.



Visit
RiasAliMD.com

This guide is educational only. Always follow your doctor's specific recommendations.
4740 Mile Stretch Drive, Holiday FL 34690 | Office: (727) 943-5200 | Fax: (727) 943-5201 | RiasAliMD.com
Online: <https://go.riasalimd.com/doac-switch-guide>



Save
Contact Info

Take This Guide With You



Scan or visit: <https://go.riasalimd.com/doac-switch-guide>

Online: <https://go.riasalimd.com/doac-switch-guide>

Office: (727) 943-5200

4740 Mile Stretch Drive, Holiday FL 34690 | Office: (727) 943-5200 | Fax: (727) 943-5201 | RiasAliMD.com



Visit
RiasAliMD.com

This guide is educational only. Always follow your doctor's specific recommendations.
4740 Mile Stretch Drive, Holiday FL 34690 | Office: (727) 943-5200 | Fax: (727) 943-5201 | RiasAliMD.com
Online: <https://go.riasalimd.com/doac-switch-guide>



Save
Contact Info