

BLOOD THINNERS

Aspirin After Joint Surgery?

Aspirin may prevent blood clots as effectively as the blood thinner rivaroxaban (*Xarelto*) beyond the first few days after hip or knee replacement, a new study suggests.

Blood clots can be a serious complication of orthopedic surgery. Preventive measures include walking right after surgery, leg-massaging pumps and blood thinners, such as warfarin (*Coumadin*) or rivaroxaban.

For the study, researchers gave nearly 3,500 patients rivaroxaban for the first five days after surgery, then half the patients continued taking it while half switched to aspirin. There were no significant differences in outcomes or bleeding risk between the groups.

This might be a game-changer, since rivaroxaban is far more expensive than aspirin, says Geoffrey Westrich, MD, an orthopedic surgeon at Hospital for Special Surgery in New York City. Plus, "There are studies that show that aspirin alone is very effective, and a more potent anticoagulant [blood thinner] may not be needed for standard-risk patients." —L.R.

SOURCE: *The New England Journal of Medicine*, February 22, 2018

