

Should I Take a Blood Thinner For One (1) Month Following my Major Abdominal Surgery or not?

This decision aid is for you if:

- You just had major surgery on your abdomen.
- You are age 18 or older.

What is a blood clot?

- A blood clot can form when your blood changes from a liquid to a gel-like state inside of your blood vessels.
- Blood clots can start in the veins in your legs (deep vein thrombosis, DVT) and can travel to your lungs (pulmonary embolism, PE).
- Blood clots are more common after major surgery and in people with cancer.
- Blood clots may cause pain and discomfort, and require treatment from your doctor. A blood clot can also have no symptoms, which means you will not notice it unless your doctor is using specific tests to find it. These tests are not routinely done to check for blood clots in patients without symptoms.
- Blood clots can be dangerous or life-threatening if they travel to your lungs (PE) and prevent blood flow from your heart to your lungs.

Am I at risk of getting a blood clot?

- We have a scale that helps find who is at risk for developing blood clots. This scale is called the Caprini risk score.
- Patients with a higher Caprini risk score are more likely to develop blood clots.

What is a blood thinner?

- A blood thinner is a medicine taken to prevent blood clots. The blood thinner is given by a nurse as an injection in the hospital, and if you continue for 1 month after surgery, you will get syringes already filled with the medicine to inject yourself at home. This may also be done by a caregiver.
- Patients typically receive an injection of a blood thinner (low molecular weight heparin) one time a day in hospital after surgery. Some studies show fewer blood clots when blood thinners are continued for one month after surgery. But other studies have shown that using a blood thinner for one month will not prevent blood clots that cause symptoms, or reduce the chance of dying.
- Side effects of taking a blood thinner mainly include bleeding (bleeding from your incision), bruising, or a reaction where you inject the medication.
- You might be familiar with other blood thinners such as aspirin, but these are currently not recommended for preventing blood clots after surgery.

What are your options?



1. Take a blood thinner by self-injection for one month following your major abdominal surgery



2. Decline a blood thinner and discuss other options with your doctor

How to proceed with this Decision Aid

With the help of your doctor, nurse, or another member of your healthcare team, please use the following table to calculate your risk for developing blood clots using the Caprini score. Then, use your total score to go to the correct page to guide you in your decision based on your Caprini score.

Caprini Score Risk Calculation

Please work with your doctor, nurse, or another member of your healthcare team to calculate your risk score. Your doctor, nurse or another member of your healthcare team will check off the boxes that apply to you, add the points together to get a total score, and then direct you to the correct page to help you in making this decision.

<p>Each Risk Factor Represents 1 Point:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> I am 41-60 years old <input type="checkbox"/> Within the last month, I have had surgery under general or local anesthesia for MORE THAN 45 minutes <input type="checkbox"/> Within the last month, I have had or currently have varicose veins <input type="checkbox"/> Within the last month, I have had or currently have swollen legs <input type="checkbox"/> Within the last month, I have had a heart attack <input type="checkbox"/> Within the last month, I have had or currently have a serious infection for example, pneumonia, cellulitis, etc. <input type="checkbox"/> I have a history of Inflammatory bowel disease (includes Crohn's or ulcerative colitis) <input type="checkbox"/> I have or have had congestive heart failure <input type="checkbox"/> I have a chronic lung disease (for example COPD, emphysema) NOT including asthma <input type="checkbox"/> I have a scheduled surgery under general or regional anesthesia for LESS THAN 45 minutes <p>SUBTOTAL:</p>	<p>Each Risk Factor Represents 2 Points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> I am 61-74 years old <input type="checkbox"/> My doctor told me I have cancer, leukemia, lymphoma, or melanoma <input type="checkbox"/> In the last month, I have had or currently have a PICC line, Port, or central venous access catheter in my neck or chest that delivers blood or medicine directly into my heart. <input type="checkbox"/> I have a scheduled surgery under general or local anesthesia for MORE THAN 45, minutes including laparoscopic surgery <p>SUBTOTAL:</p> <p>Risk Factor Represents 5 Points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Within the past month, I have had a stroke (clot or hemorrhage in the brain, transient ischemic attack). <p>SUBTOTAL:</p>
<p>Each Risk Factor Represents 3 Points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> I am 75 or older <input type="checkbox"/> I have had a blood clot in my legs, arms, abdomen, or lungs <input type="checkbox"/> There is someone in my family (parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, siblings, cousins) that has suffered from a blood clot <input type="checkbox"/> I have been told that I have an abnormal blood test indicating an increased risk for blood clotting <p>SUBTOTAL:</p>	<p>For Women Only: (Each Represents 1 Point)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> I currently use birth control (oral contraceptives, skin implantable devices, hormonal patches, IUD with hormones, depo shot) or hormone replacement therapy. Not including condoms or barrier devices. <input type="checkbox"/> I am currently pregnant or gave birth in the last month <input type="checkbox"/> I have a history of unexplained stillborn infant, MORE THAN 3 spontaneous abortions, premature birth with preeclampsia, or baby born smaller than appropriate (low weight at birth). <p>SUBTOTAL:</p>
<p>TOTAL SCORE: (add subtotals together):</p>	

If you scored **3 or 4**: Proceed to page 3
 If you scored **5 or 6**: Proceed to page 5
 If you scored **7 or 8**: Proceed to page 7
 If you scored **9 or more**: Proceed to page 9

Working through the 4 steps of this decision aid may help you consider the options.

CAPRINI SCORE: 3 OR 4

Step 1: What are the **benefits** and **harms** of each option?

What does the research show?

The numbers below describe a 'best estimate' of what happens to **1000 people** who take a blood thinner for one month following major abdominal surgery. The shaded numbers show the number of people affected. There is no way of knowing in advance if you will be affected.

Benefits	Take blood thinner	Decline
<p>If 1000 people with a Caprini score of 3-4 take a blood thinner for one month following surgery, 4 more people will avoid a blood clot compared to those who do not take a blood thinner.</p> <p><i>A blood clot may cause pain and discomfort, and require treatment from your doctor. A blood clot can also have no symptoms – which means you will not notice it unless your doctor is using specific tests to find it (these tests are not normally done).</i></p>	<p>997 avoid a blood clot, ~3 will get one</p>	<p>993 avoid a blood clot, 7 will get one</p>
<p>If 1000 people with a Caprini score of 3-4 take a blood thinner for one month following surgery, <1 will avoid dying from a blood clot, which is the same for people who decline a blood thinner.</p>	<p>~1,000 avoid dying, <1 will die</p>	<p>~1,000 avoid dying, <1 will die</p>

<p>Minor Harms</p> <p>If 1000 people take a blood thinner, 5 more may develop bothersome minor bleeding.</p> <p><i>Clinically relevant minor bleeding is any amount of bleeding that impacts your ability to perform daily activities, makes you seek medical attention, or causes you to stop taking blood thinners. For example, minor bleeding from your surgical site.</i></p>	<p>17 will bleed, 983 will avoid this</p>	<p>12 will bleed, 988 will avoid this</p>
<p>Serious Harms</p> <p>If 1000 people take a blood thinner, ~4 more people may develop major bleeding compared to those who decline a blood thinner. <i>Major bleeding may require a blood transfusion, repeat surgery or may result in death.</i></p>	<p>~14 will bleed, 986 will avoid this</p>	<p>~10 will bleed, 990 will avoid this</p>

Step 2. What matters most to you?

Some common reasons to choose each option are listed below. Please mark with a checkmark how much each reason matters to you (1 means **not** important, 5 means **very** important).

Reasons to take a blood thinner	Not Important					Very Important
How important is it for you to avoid 1 month of treatment for a blood clot?	⓪	①	②	③	④	⑤
How important is it for you to avoid a blood clot that could result in death?	⓪	①	②	③	④	⑤
Other reasons: _____						

Reasons to decline a blood thinner						Not Important						Very Important			
How important is it to you to avoid minor bleeding that affects your daily life?	①	②	③	④	⑤	①	②	③	④	⑤					
How important is it to you to avoid major bleeding that could result in death?	①	②	③	④	⑤	①	②	③	④	⑤					
Other reasons: _____															

Considering the options and what reasons are important to you, which option do you prefer?

Check one.

- take a blood thinner injection at home for one month following your surgery
- decline taking blood thinner injections at home following your surgery
- I am unsure

Step 3: : Check Your Understanding

Check <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> the best answer.	Take blood thinner	decline blood thinner	Both same	Don't know
1. Which option has the <u>highest</u> chance of avoiding a blood clot ?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Which option has the <u>lowest</u> chance of dying from a blood clot ?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Which option has the <u>lowest</u> chance of minor relevant bleeding ?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Which option has the <u>highest</u> chance of major bleeding ?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Check your answers at the bottom of the page.

Find out how comfortable you feel about deciding.

	Yes	No
Do you know the benefits and harms of each option?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are you clear about which benefits and risks matter most to you?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you have enough support and advice to make a choice?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you feel sure about the best choice for you?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you answered 'No' to any of these, discuss with your surgeon.

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Step 4: What are your next steps?

Check what you want to do next.

- I have decided to take a blood thinner at home for one month following my surgery
- I have decided not to take a blood thinner
- I need to discuss the options with my doctor/surgeon and family.
- I need to learn more about my options.

This information is not intended to replace the advice of a health care provider.

Answers for the key facts: 1. [A], 2. [C], 3. [B], 4. [A].

CAPRINI SCORE: 5 OR 6

Step 1: What are the **benefits** and **harms** of each option?

What does the research show?

The numbers below describe a 'best estimate' of what happens to **1000 people** who take a blood thinner for one month following major abdominal surgery. The shaded numbers show the number of people affected. There is no way of knowing in advance if you will be affected.

Benefits	Take blood thinner	Decline
<p>If 1000 people with a Caprini score of 5-6 take a blood thinner for one month following surgery, 10 more will avoid a blood clot compared to those who decline a blood thinner.</p> <p><i>A blood clot may cause pain and discomfort, and require treatment from your doctor. A blood clot can also have no symptoms – which means you will not notice it unless your doctor is using specific tests to find it (these tests are not normally done).</i></p>	<p>992 avoid a blood clot, ~8 will get one</p>	<p>982 avoid a blood clot, 18 will get one</p>
<p>If 1000 people with a Caprini score of 5-6 take a blood thinner for one month following surgery, <1 will avoid dying from a blood clot, which is the same for people who decline a blood thinner.</p>	<p>~1000 avoid dying, <1 will die</p>	<p>~1000 avoid dying, <1 will die</p>

Minor Harms		
<p>If 1000 people take a blood thinner, 5 more may develop bothersome minor bleeding compared to those who decline a blood thinner.</p> <p><i>Clinically relevant minor bleeding is any amount of bleeding that impacts your ability to perform daily activities, seek medical attention, or causes you to stop taking blood thinners. For example, minor bleeding from your surgical site.</i></p>	<p>17 will bleed, 983 will avoid this</p>	<p>12 will bleed, 988 will avoid this</p>
<p>Serious Harms</p> <p>If 1000 people take a blood thinner, ~4 more people may develop major bleeding compared to those who decline a blood thinner. <i>Major bleeding may require a blood transfusion, repeat surgery or may result in death.</i></p>	<p>~14 will bleed, 986 will avoid this</p>	<p>~10 will bleed, 990 will avoid this</p>

Step 2. What matters most to you?

Some common reasons to choose each option are listed below. Please mark with a checkmark how much each reason matters to you (1 means **not** important, 5 means **very** important).

Reasons to take a blood thinner	Not Important	Very Important
How important is it for you to avoid 1 month of treatment for a blood clot?	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
How important is it to you to avoid a blood clot that could result in death?	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
Other reasons: _____	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
Reasons to decline a blood thinner	Not	Very

	Important		Important		
How important is it to you to avoid minor bleeding that affects your daily life?	①	②	③	④	⑤
How important is it to you to avoid major bleeding that could result in death?	①	②	③	④	⑤
Other reasons: _____					

Considering the options and what reasons are important to you, which option do you prefer?

Check one.

- take a blood thinner injection at home for one month following your surgery
- decline taking blood thinner injections at home following your surgery
- I am unsure

Step 3: Check Your Understanding

Check <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> the best answer.	Take blood thinner	decline blood thinner	Both same	Don't know
1. Which option has the <u>highest</u> chance of avoiding a blood clot ?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Which option has the <u>lowest</u> chance of dying from a blood clot ?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Which option has the <u>lowest</u> chance of minor relevant bleeding ?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Which option has the <u>highest</u> chance of major bleeding ?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Check your answers at the bottom of the page.

Find out how comfortable you feel about deciding.	Yes	No
Do you know the benefits and harms of each option?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are you clear about which benefits and risks matter most to you?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you have enough support and advice to make a choice?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you feel sure about the best choice for you?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>If you answered 'No' to any of these, discuss with your surgeon.</i>		
<i>(The SURE Test © O'Connor & Légaré, 2008)</i>		

Step 4: What are your next steps?

Check what you want to do next.

- I have decided to take a blood thinner at home for one month following my surgery
- I have decided not to take a blood thinner
- I need to discuss the options with my doctor/surgeon and family.
- I need to learn more about my options.

This information is not intended to replace the advice of a health care provider.

Answers for the key facts: 1. [A], 2. [C], 3. [B], 4. [A].

CAPRINI SCORE: 7 OR 8

Step 1: What are the **benefits** and **harms** of each option?

What does the research show?

The numbers below describe a 'best estimate' of what happens to **1000 people** who take a blood thinner for one month following major abdominal surgery. The shaded numbers show the number of people affected. There is no way of knowing in advance if you will be affected.

Benefits	Take blood thinner	Decline
<p>If 1000 people with a Caprini score of 7-8 take a blood thinner for one month following surgery, 21 more will avoid a blood clot compared to those who decline a blood thinner.</p> <p><i>A blood clot may cause pain and discomfort, and require treatment from your doctor. A blood clot can also have no symptoms – which means you will not notice it unless your doctor is using specific tests to find it (these tests are not normally done).</i></p>	<p>981 avoid a blood clot, ~19 will get one</p>	<p>960 avoid a blood clot, 40 will get one</p>
<p>If 1000 people with a Caprini score of 7-8 take a blood thinner for one month following surgery, <1 will avoid dying from a blood clot, which is the same for people who decline a blood thinner.</p>	<p>~1000 avoid dying, <1 will die</p>	<p>~1000 avoid dying, <1 will die</p>

Minor Harms		
<p>If 1000 people take a blood thinner, 5 more may develop bothersome minor bleeding.</p> <p>Compared to those who decline a blood thinner.</p> <p><i>Clinically relevant minor bleeding is any amount of bleeding that impacts your ability to perform daily activities, seek medical attention, or causes you to stop taking blood thinners. For example, minor bleeding from your surgical site.</i></p>	<p>17 will bleed, 983 will avoid this</p>	<p>12 will bleed, 988 will avoid this</p>
<p>Serious Harms</p> <p>If 1000 people take a blood thinner, ~4 more people may develop major bleeding compared to those who decline a blood thinner. <i>Major bleeding may require a blood transfusion, repeat surgery or may result in death.</i></p>	<p>~14 will bleed, 986 will avoid this</p>	<p>~10 will bleed, 990 will avoid this</p>

Step 2. What matters most to you?

Some common reasons to choose each option are listed below. Please mark with a checkmark how much each reason matters to you (1 means **not** important, 5 means **very** important).

Reasons to take a blood thinner	Not Important	Very Important
How important is it for you to avoid 1 month of treatment for a blood clot?	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
How important is it to you to avoid a blood clot that could result in death?	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
Other reasons: _____		

Reasons to decline a blood thinner	Not Important					Very Important
How important is it to you to avoid minor bleeding that affects your daily life?	①	①	②	③	④	⑤
How important is it to you to avoid major bleeding that could result in death?	①	①	②	③	④	⑤
Other reasons: _____						

Considering the options and what reasons are important to you, which option do you prefer?

Check one.

- take a blood thinner injection at home for one month following your surgery
- decline taking blood thinner injections at home following your surgery
- I am unsure

Step 3: Check Your Understanding

Check <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> the best answer.	Take blood thinner	decline blood thinner	Both same	Don't know
1. Which option has the <u>highest</u> chance of avoiding a blood clot ?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Which option has the <u>lowest</u> chance of dying from a blood clot ?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Which option has the <u>lowest</u> chance of minor relevant bleeding ?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Which option has the <u>highest</u> chance of major bleeding ?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Check your answers at the bottom of the page.

Find out how comfortable you feel about deciding.

	Yes	No
Do you know the benefits and harms of each option?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are you clear about which benefits and risks matter most to you?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you have enough support and advice to make a choice?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you feel sure about the best choice for you?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you answered 'No' to any of these, discuss with your surgeon.

(The SURE Test © O'Connor & Légaré, 2008)

Step 4: What are your next steps?

Check what you want to do next.

- I have decided to take a blood thinner at home for one month following my surgery
- I have decided not to take a blood thinner
- I need to discuss the options with my doctor/surgeon and family.
- I need to learn more about my options.

This information is not intended to replace the advice of a health care provider.

Answers for the key facts: 1. [A], 2. [C], 3. [B], 4. [A].

CAPRINI SCORE: 9 OR MORE

Step 1: What are the **benefits** and **harms** of each option?

What does the research show?

The numbers below describe a 'best estimate' of what happens to **1000 people** who take a blood thinner for one month following major abdominal surgery. The shaded numbers show the number of people affected. There is no way of knowing in advance if you will be affected.

Benefits	Take blood thinner	Decline
<p>If 1000 people with a Caprini score of 9 or more take a blood thinner for 1 month following surgery, 57 more will avoid a blood clot compared to those who decline a blood thinner. <i>A blood clot may cause pain and discomfort, and require treatment from your doctor. A blood clot can also have no symptoms – which means you will not notice it unless your doctor is using specific tests to find it (these tests are not normally done).</i></p>	<p>950 avoid a blood clot, ~50 will get one</p>	<p>893 avoid a blood clot, 107 will get one</p>
<p>If 1000 people with a Caprini score of 9 or more take a blood thinner for 1 month following surgery, ~0.28 more will avoid dying from a blood clot compared to those who decline a blood thinner.</p>	<p>~1000 avoid dying, <1 will die</p>	<p>~1000 avoid dying, 1 will die</p>

<p>Minor Harms If 1000 people take a blood thinner, 5 more may develop clinically relevant bleeding compared to those who decline a blood thinner. <i>Clinically relevant minor bleeding is any amount of bleeding that impacts your ability to perform daily activities, seek medical attention, or causes you to stop taking blood thinners. For example, minor bleeding from your surgical site.</i></p>	<p>17 will bleed, 983 will avoid this</p>	<p>12 will bleed, 988 will avoid this</p>
<p>Serious Harms If 1000 people take a blood thinner, ~4 more people may develop major bleeding compared to those who decline a blood thinner. <i>Major bleeding may require a blood transfusion, repeat surgery or may result in death.</i></p>	<p>~14 will bleed, 986 will avoid this</p>	<p>~10 will bleed, 990 will avoid this</p>

Step 2. What matters most to you?

Some common reasons to choose each option are listed below. Please mark with a checkmark how much each reason matters to you (1 means **not** important, 5 means **very** important).

Reasons to take a blood thinner	Not Important	Very Important
How important is it for you to avoid 1 month of treatment for a blood clot?	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
How important is it to you to avoid a blood clot that could result in death?	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
Other reasons: _____	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
Reasons to decline a blood thinner	Not	Very

	Important			Important		
How important is it to you to avoid minor bleeding that affects your daily life?	①	①	②	③	④	⑤
How important is it to you to avoid major bleeding that could result in death?	①	①	②	③	④	⑤
Other reasons: _____						

Considering the options and what reasons are important to you, which option do you prefer?

Check one.

- take a blood thinner injection at home for one month following your surgery
- decline taking blood thinner injections at home following your surgery
- I am unsure

Step 3: Check Your Understanding

Check <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> the best answer.	Take blood thinner	Decline blood thinner	Both same	Don't know
1. Which option has the <u>highest</u> chance of avoiding a blood clot ?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Which option has the <u>lowest</u> chance of dying from a blood clot ?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Which option has the <u>lowest</u> chance of minor relevant bleeding ?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Which option has the <u>highest</u> chance of major bleeding ?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Check your answers at the bottom of the page.

Find out how comfortable you feel about deciding.	Yes	No
Do you know the benefits and harms of each option?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are you clear about which benefits and risks matter most to you?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you have enough support and advice to make a choice?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you feel sure about the best choice for you?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If you answered 'No' to any of these, discuss with your surgeon. (The SURE Test © O'Connor & Légaré, 2008)		

Step 4: What are your next steps?

Check what you want to do next.

- I have decided to take a blood thinner at home for one month following my surgery
- I have decided not to take a blood thinner
- I need to discuss the options with my doctor/surgeon and family.
- I need to learn more about my options.

This information is not intended to replace the advice of a health care provider.

Answers for the key facts: 1. [A], 2. [A], 3. [B], 4. [A]

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Content editors: Victoria Ivankovic, MD Candidate, Rebecca Auer, MSc, MD, FRCSC, *Marc Carrier MD, FRCPC, Kristen McAlpine, MD, FRCSC

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