

# Aspirin

Medication Information Leaflet

## What is this medication for?

Aspirin (also known as Acetylsalicylic acid) is used to prevent blood clots from forming by making the blood less 'sticky'. By preventing blood clots, this reduces the risk of you having a heart attack or stroke.

You may be given Aspirin if you have a blockage in your blood vessels or after heart surgery.

Aspirin can also be prescribed after Kawasaki disease (a condition whereby there is inflammation in the blood vessels) for four to six weeks, or longer if your doctor feels that it is necessary due to any abnormalities of the blood vessels that supply the heart with blood, oxygen and nutrients.

Aspirin may also be used at higher doses to relieve pain and fever or for anti-inflammatory purposes. Inform your healthcare professional if you wish to consume Aspirin to relieve pain or fever.

Aspirin may be started during pregnancy in certain women to prevent the development of pre-eclampsia, a serious condition that usually presents as high blood pressure with or without protein in the urine. Aspirin is normally taken at night for this purpose.

## How should I take/use this medication?

- Do not stop taking your medication without checking with your healthcare professional.
- This medication should be taken after food to reduce stomach irritation
- Depending on the type of Aspirin you are taking, you may be required to:
  - Chew or suck on the tablets.
  - Dissolve the tablet in a specific amount of water and syringe out the appropriate amount before taking it.
  - Swallow the tablet without chewing or dissolving in water.
- Consult your pharmacist if you are not sure of the correct way of taking your Aspirin tablets.

## What should I do if I forget to take/use this medication?

If you miss a dose, take the missed dose as soon as you remember. If it is almost time for your next dose, take only the usual dose. Do not double your dose or use extra medication to make up for the missed dose.

## What precautions should I take?

Inform your healthcare professional if:

- You are allergic to this medication or any medication that belongs to the nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug class ('NSAID' or 'painkillers') such as Ibuprofen or Naproxen
- You are pregnant, planning to become pregnant, or breastfeeding
- You have a history of stomach or bowel ulcers or bleeding, or bleeding problems
- You are planned for any medical procedures, surgeries or dental procedures
- You are taking other medications, including supplements, traditional or herbal remedies

## What are some common side-effects of this medication?

Side effects of Aspirin may include:

- Stomach discomfort/ irritation e.g. stomach pain, heartburn
- Mild bleeding such as
  - Unexplained nose bleed
  - Bleeding from gums when brushing teeth
  - Bleeding from small cuts for 10-15 minutes even as you apply pressure on the wound. Check with your doctor if the bleeding does not stop within 15 minutes or if you feel unwell.
  - Menstrual bleeding that is heavier than normal. However, heavy menstrual bleeding can also happen for other reasons. Do check with your doctor if you feel unwell.

Inform your healthcare professional if these side effects do not go away and are bothersome to you.

## What are some rare but serious side-effects that I need to seek medical advice immediately?

Patients taking Aspirin may have increased risk of bleeding. If you experience any serious bleeding, you should stop your medication and inform your healthcare professional immediately. Serious bleeding may include one or more of the following:

- Blood in the urine
- Black and sticky stools (if you are not using iron supplements at the same time)
- Unexplained large bruises
- Coughing up blood or coffee ground-like vomit
- Sudden severe headache with nausea or loss of consciousness

Aspirin may also cause allergic reactions. The symptoms of a drug allergy include one or more of the following:

- Swollen face/eyes/lips/tongue
- Difficulty in breathing
- Itchy skin rashes over your whole body

If you experience any of these symptoms, you should stop your medication and see your healthcare professional immediately.

Very rarely, Aspirin may cause Reye's syndrome, a rare but serious condition that affects the brain and liver in young children. However, this has only been mostly seen in children less than 5 years of age, who have had a viral illness (chickenpox or flu) or are on prolonged, high-dose Aspirin. Symptoms of Reye's syndrome include:

- Severe vomiting with viral symptoms such as fever, aches and pain
- Confusion and tiredness
- Change in behaviour
- Blackout

See your doctor immediately if you (or your child) experience these symptoms.

## **How should I store this medication?**

Store in a cool and dry place, away from direct sunlight. Keep this medication away from children. Throw away all expired medications.

## **How should I throw away this medication safely?**

Pack this medication into a black trash bag and seal it tightly before throwing into the rubbish chute or bin.

### **Disclaimers**

If you take more than the recommended dose, please seek medical advice immediately. The information provided on this page does not replace information from your healthcare professional. Please consult your healthcare professional for more information.

*This article is jointly developed by members of the National Medication Information workgroup. The workgroup consists of cluster partners (National Healthcare Group, National University Health System and SingHealth), community pharmacies (Guardian, Unity and Watsons) and Pharmaceutical Society of Singapore.*

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