Acetylsalicylic Acid (ASA)

Information for patients

Read this medicine fact sheet to learn about:

• What this medicine is
• Why you need to take it
• What side effects to watch for

What is the name of my medicine?
Acetylsalicylic (pronounced Ah – seet – l – sal – i – sil – ik) acid. It is also often called aspirin or ASA.

Other names for this medicine:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brand Name</th>
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<td>Aspirin, Entrophen, Novasen, Anacin</td>
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Why do I need to take this medicine?

• To prevent parts of your blood, called platelets, from sticking together and forming clots.
• To prevent clots from forming in stents (metal tubes) put in your coronary (heart) arteries.
• To prevent a heart attack or stroke caused by a narrow blood vessel becoming clogged.
• High doses of this medicine are used to treat inflammation (pain, redness and swelling) of the lining of your heart. This problem is also called pericarditis.

What do I need to know when taking this medicine?

• If you are taking aspirin, avoid choosing aspirin or aspirin-like products like Advil, Motrin or Aleve when you want to buy an over-the-counter pain medicine (unless your doctor gave you different instructions). If you are not sure which pain medicine to choose, ask your pharmacist.

• You can take aspirin with or without food or milk. But, taking aspirin with food or milk and choosing aspirin tablets that are coated may prevent stomach upset, nausea or vomiting.

• Bleeding problems are more common if you take aspirin with blood thinning medicines such as warfarin (Coumadin) or heparin. Only take these medicines together if your doctor prescribed them.

• Always check labels carefully. Some medicines and products (such as Pepto-Bismol, Robaxisal or some cold medicines) contain aspirin or salicylate. Taking them with aspirin could cause an overdose. Ask your pharmacist if you are not sure.

• **Always check with your doctor or pharmacist before taking any other medicine.** This includes:
  - medicines prescribed by a doctor or bought in a pharmacy
  - vitamins or herbal remedies

What are the side effects of this medicine?

• Stomach pain

• Nausea (feeling like you may throw up)

• Vomiting (throwing up)

Some side effects may go away as your body gets used to the medicine.
Call your doctor right away if you:

- have a lot of bleeding or bruising. For example:
  - black or tar coloured stools or bloody stools
  - vomit that looks very dark (like coffee grounds)
  - bleeding gums or nose bleeds that won’t stop after you apply pressure
- feel dizzy or faint
- have a skin rash, itching or hives
- have difficulty breathing
- have ringing in your ears or a loss of hearing
- have very bad stomach pain

What should I do if I miss a dose?

- Take a missed dose as soon as you remember.
- If it is close to the time for your next dose, skip the missed dose and take the next dose at your normal time.
- Do not take 2 doses at the same time.

Who do I talk to if I have a problem or question?

This fact sheet does not cover all of the side effects that may happen. If you are concerned about any side effects, please ask your doctor or pharmacist for more information or advice.

If you are not sure what to do when taking this medicine, talk to your doctor or pharmacist.

This fact sheet was created by the University Health Network Pharmacy Department. It is for your information only. It should not replace talking with your pharmacist. Please talk to your pharmacist or other health care professional if you have any questions about this medicine.