

# Anti-Platelet Medicine

Enteric Coated ASA (Aspirin®)

## Pharmacy Services

This is intended as a general reference.

It does not replace the advice given to you by your healthcare provider.



## What is ASA used for?

We use this type of medicine for any of these reasons:

- To reduce heart attack and stroke risk in certain people.
- To relieve fever, pain and inflammation.

ASA is usually given to patients who have previously had a heart attack or stroke.

## How does ASA work?

ASA is an anti-platelet medication. It works by preventing the platelets in your blood from clumping together and forming a blood clot. This reduces the chances of a heart attack or stroke.

After a heart attack or stroke, some people have stents placed into the arteries that supply blood to the heart muscle (the coronary arteries) or to the brain (carotid arteries). A stent is a tiny tube of reinforced with wire that helps keep the blocked artery open. ASA helps keep blood clots from forming inside these stents. This reduces your chances of having another heart attack or stroke.

Note: You should not stop taking ASA unless your heart or stroke doctor has told you to stop.

ASA is used to treat minor aches and pains. It can help relieve mild to moderate pain and swelling caused by any of these conditions:

- inflamed lining around the heart (pericarditis)
- arthritis or joint pain
- dental pain
- monthly bleeding or menstrual cramps
- headaches
- other minor injuries

## What should I expect?

Although you will not be able to see or feel a difference while taking this medicine, it is working to reduce your chances of heart attack and stroke.

## How do I take ASA?

To prevent heart attack or stroke, take this medicine once a day  
Try to take this medicine at the same time each day.

### **Enteric-coated tablets:**

- Take by mouth and swallow whole with water.  
Do not crush or chew the tablets.
- Take with food.

### **Regular release tablets (without enteric-coating):**

- Take by mouth with a full glass of water.
- Take with food.
- Stand or sit upright for about 10 minutes after taking the medicine to lessen the chances of it irritating your stomach.

Some people can take ASA up to 3 to 4 times a day for a short period to quickly reduce pain and swelling. Follow the schedule for tapering down the amount, if provided. Contact your doctor if your pain increases as taper the amount down.

**Do not** stop taking the medication or adjust your dose without first talking to your doctor or pharmacist.

**Do not** take ASA if the tablets smell like vinegar. This means the ASA has expired.

Note: You might be able to get ASA as a suppository. Please refer to manufacturer package instructions or ask your pharmacist how to take the suppository.

## What should I do if I miss a dose?

Do your best to **never miss a dose**, if possible.

If you do miss a dose, take it as soon as you remember the same day. If it is almost time for your next dose, take only that dose and return to your regular schedule.

**Do not** take 2 doses at the same time, unless your heart or stroke doctor has told you differently.

Contact your pharmacist, or heart or stroke doctor if you have any questions about how to take this medicine.

## How might ASA affect my lifestyle?

**Tell others:** Before you have any dental work, medical procedures, or surgery, tell the doctor or dentist you are taking ASA.

**Alcohol:** Drinking alcohol can also irritate your stomach. This increases your chances of getting ulcers or bleeding in the stomach.

**Pregnancy:** Usually, this medicine should not be taken when pregnant or infant feeding. Tell your doctor or pharmacist if you are pregnant, planning to become pregnant, or are breastfeeding / chestfeeding.

## Can I take ASA with other medicines?

ASA can change how other medicines work and other medicines can change how ASA works. This includes medicines prescribed for you, medicines you buy without a prescription, supplements, as well as herbal, alternative, and natural medicines.

Ask your doctor or pharmacist about any medicines or supplements that you are currently taking.

Always check with your doctor or pharmacist before starting any new medicines or medicinal products, especially products that can affect blood clotting or bleeding. This might also include some cough and cold medicines and muscle relaxants.

Examples in medicines and products that can affect clotting and bleeding:

- warfarin (Coumadin®)
- anticoagulants such as apixaban (Eliquis®), rivaroxaban (Xarelto®), edoxaban (Lixiana®), dabigatran(Pradaxa®)
- anti-inflammatory and pain relief medicines such as ibuprofen (Advil®, Motrin®), naproxen (Aleve®, Naprosyn®)
- medicines that contain aspirin (Alka Seltzer®, Anacin®, Aspergum)
- supplements and herbal products such as feverfew, fish oil, omega-3 fatty acids, garlic, ginger, ginkgo biloba

## What should I watch for?

Most people who take ASA do not notice any side effects but they are possible.

Side effects to watch for:

- upset stomach, indigestion or “heart burn”
- minor bruising or bleeding
- ringing in the ears
- skin rash
- diarrhea or constipation

Tell your doctor or pharmacist if any of these side effects bother you, don’t go away, or get worse.

**Get medical care right away** if any of these happen:

- new swelling of the lips, face, tongue, or throat
- bloody or black, tar-like stools (poops)
- blood red or brown urine (pee)
- blistering or peeling skin rash
- feeling confused
- dizzy
- extremely tired
- sudden hearing loss



**Call 9-1-1** if any of these happen:

- trouble breathing
- chest tightness that is new or does not ease with nitroglycerin
- signs of stroke - facial drooping, arm weakness, slurred speech



If you have any questions about this medicine:

- Ask your pharmacist.
- Ask your doctor.
- Call HealthLinkBC. **8-1-1** or TTY 7-1-1

Speak to a nurse any time, a pharmacist after hours, or a dietitian on weekdays.

HealthLinkBC is open 24 hours. Available in 130 languages. For an interpreter, say your language in English. Wait until an interpreter comes on the phone.

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