

Information on Aminosalicylates (5 ASA's) for Inflammatory Bowel Disease

What are 5 ASA's?

5 ASA's are anti-inflammatory medicines, which are specially designed to reduce the active inflammation on the lining of the bowel. This leaflet aims to tell you more about 5 ASA's.

There are several different 5 ASA's

Sulphasalazine – brand name is Salazopyrin

Mesalazine – brand names include Pentasa, Asacol, Salofalk, and Octasa

Balsalazide – brand names is Colazide

Olsalazine – brand name is Dipentum

How is it taken?

5 ASA's are usually taken orally (by mouth) in tablet, granule, capsule or syrup form. Very occasionally they are given rectally (into the bottom) in suppository or enema form. They are all specially designed to release the active ingredient to the part of the bowel that is inflamed; therefore it is important to swallow the capsules or tablets whole, without chewing them. The granules can be added to a spoonful of jam or yogurt.

The amount of 5 ASA required will be prescribed by the child's doctor who calculates the dose required according to the child's body weight.

How many times a day the medicine is taken will depend on the form in which it is taken (tablet, capsule or granule).

What are 5 ASA's used for?

5 ASA's are used to reduce the active inflammation in the bowel, allowing the damaged lining of the bowel time to heal. 5 ASA's are often the first line of treatment used in treating mild to moderate symptoms in the management of inflammatory bowel diseases (IBD) like Crohn's Disease and Ulcerative Colitis and they have been shown to be very beneficial in the maintenance therapy to reduce the risk of recurrent 'flare ups'.

How long will it take for the 5 ASA's to work?

It usually takes 2 – 3 weeks to begin working.

How long will 5 ASA's need to be taken?

Usually 5 ASA's need to be taken over a long period of time, which generally means they need to be taken over a number of years rather than months.

What are the benefits of taking 5 ASA's?

It is hoped that by taking 5 ASA's there will be less 'flare ups' of the disease. A 'flare up' is when symptoms of the disease come back.

Are there any side effects?

Remember all medicines affect people in different ways. It is very possible that none of the side effects mentioned here will be experienced. However, the possible side effects of any medicine need to be balanced against the risk of problems if the disease is not treated properly.

Common side effects:

- ❖ Diarrhoea
- ❖ Nausea
- ❖ Headaches
- ❖ Rashes

Less common side effects:

- ❖ Unexplained bleeding (e.g unexpected nosebleeds, bleeding from gums)
- ❖ Bruising
- ❖ Skin Rashes
- ❖ Long lasting Sore Throats
- ❖ Lethargy
- ❖ Fever
- ❖ If your child should experience any of these symptoms please contact a member of the children's gastroenterology team or Children's Assessment Unit (CAU) as it may mean that the medicine needs to be reduced or stopped. Contact details at the bottom of this leaflet.

How will the treatment be monitored?

A blood test will be taken one month after starting the treatment, to monitor any side effects. Following this blood test, a blood test will be taken at least every 6 months to monitor there are no side effects and to ensure the treatment is working.

Other medicines

Check with a member of the children's gastroenterology team or pharmacist before taking new medicines (including complimentary or herbal medicines) to ensure the combination is safe.

General Points

- ❖ Keep all medicines in a safe place where children cannot reach them, and away from heat and direct sunlight.
- ❖ Please check the expiry date of medicine, make sure that the medicine has not reached the 'expiry' or 'use by' date, on the packaging. Your pharmacist will dispose of any old medicines.
- ❖ Follow the instructions on the label/box
- ❖ Try to give medicines at about the same times each day, to help you remember
- ❖ Only give this medicine to the person it's prescribed for
- ❖ Make sure that you always have enough medicine, order a new prescription through your GP at least 2 weeks before you will run out.

How to contact a member of the Children's Gastroenterology Team or the Children's Assessment Unit if you have any queries or concerns

The members of the children's gastroenterology team are available Monday – Friday between 09.00 – 17.00 hours on the following numbers: -

Children's Gastroenterology Specialist Nurse	01603 286320
Paediatric Consultant	01603 289174
Children's Assessment Unit	01603 289774

