



# ANTIPLATELETS

## A guide for stroke patients

The information in this leaflet is intended for general guidance. If your doctor has given you different advice, follow those instructions.

### What are antiplatelets for?

Antiplatelets are medicines which help prevent blood clots forming. Blood clots can sometimes block blood vessels and cause a stroke.

If you have already had a stroke or a mini-stroke, taking an antiplatelet drug can reduce your chance of having another stroke.

### Names

Examples of antiplatelets are LOW DOSE ASPIRIN (75 mg or 300 mg each day), CLOPIDOGREL and DIPYRIDAMOLE M/R. Sometimes LOW DOSE ASPIRIN may be taken together with another antiplatelet.

### How should I take the medication?

Swallow the number of tablets or capsules prescribed with a glass of water. If your ASPIRIN tablets are soluble, dissolve them in water first and take them with or after food. DIPYRIDAMOLE M/R capsules should be swallowed whole, preferably with food. If you have been prescribed CLOPIDOGREL you should avoid drinking grapefruit juice. If you find it difficult to swallow your medication, speak to your doctor or pharmacist.

### How will I know if the antiplatelets are working?

You will not notice anything different.

### How long will I have to take antiplatelets for?

Probably for many years. Do not stop taking them unless your doctor tells you to do so.



### **What if I forget a dose?**

Take it as soon as you remember. If it is nearly time for the next dose, miss out the one you forgot. **DO NOT** double up the dose.

### **Are there any side effects?**

The most common side effects of low dose ASPIRIN are stomach upset and indigestion. The most common side effects of CLOPIDOGREL are stomach upset and bleeding.

If you experience any unexplained bleeding or bleeding that doesn't stop by itself, or allergic reactions (rash or breathing difficulties) while on aspirin or clopidogrel, consult your doctor immediately.

The most common side effects of DIPYRIDAMOLE M/R are stomach upset and throbbing headache. In most cases these side effects are mild and disappear as your body gets used to dipyridamole.

If you are concerned about any side effects or have any unusual effects, speak to your doctor.

### **Can I have other medicines?**

There are some medicines that interact with antiplatelets. There is an increased risk of bleeding when antiplatelets are given with warfarin and other anticoagulants, and with anti-inflammatory pain killers (e.g. Ibuprofen).

Certain medications may cause clopidogrel to work less effectively.

Always check with your doctor or pharmacist before taking any new medicines, supplements or herbal products.

### **Can I drink alcohol?**

Alcohol intake should be kept to a minimum. If in doubt, you should ask your doctor.

### **How do I find out more?**

The information in this leaflet is limited. If you would like more information, see the patient information leaflet provided with your medication. You can also ask your doctor or pharmacist for further information.

### **For further information phone:**

01603 286286 and ask for the '**Pharmacy Helpline**' between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m.

Monday to Friday. Pharmacy Department

Norfolk and Norwich University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

