

# MESALAZINE

**Other names:** Asacol®, Asamax®, Pentasa®



**Important note:** The following information is intended to add to, not replace, the knowledge and judgment of your doctor, pharmacist or other health care professional.

## Why you are taking this medicine

Mesalazine works as a topical anti-inflammatory (reduces inflammation). This anti-inflammatory action of mesalazine prevents substances (e.g. prostaglandins) attacking the gut (gastrointestinal tract). Because of this action gut symptoms are minimised including swelling of the gut surface, pain, diarrhoea and bleeding.

Mesalazine can be used for the following conditions:

- Ulcerative colitis (affects mainly the rectum and large bowel)
- Crohn's Disease (affects any part of the gastrointestinal tract)

## When to take this medicine

Before starting treatment, if you are allergic to salicylates (e.g. aspirin), make sure your doctor knows.

There are a number of different brands of mesalazine, some of which works in different ways allowing mesalazine to be released into specific areas of the gut. This means your treatment could be affected if switching between some brands.

Oral mesalazine comes in two formulations; enteric coated (EC) tablet and a prolonged release tablet. These preparations are **not interchangeable**. Make sure you get the same brand every time.

Asacol (EC) is taken one hour before food. Asamax (EC) is taken with food. Both these preparations should be swallowed whole, not broken, crushed or chewed.

Pentasa prolonged release tablets should not be chewed. If a person has trouble taking tablets, this preparation can be dispersed in 50mL of cold water, stirred and drunk immediately.

You should take your tablets regularly, usually in divided doses or as your doctor tells you.

Treatment with mesalazine may be long term to prevent flare-ups of the bowel condition. **DO NOT STOP** taking your mesalazine without your doctor's permission.

## If you miss a dose

If you miss a dose of this medicine take it as soon as possible except when it is close to the time for your next dose. If it is almost time for next dose, skip the missed dose and return to your regular dosing schedule. You should not take two doses at the same time.

## Side Effects

Unfortunately as well as having good effects, most medicines have some effects on your body that are unwanted. These are called *side effects*.

Call your doctor **immediately** if you have any of these side effects:

- severe stomach cramps, especially the upper abdominal area
- unexplained bleeding, bruising, red or purple skin discolouration
- skin rash, severe itching or hives (allergic reaction)
- wheezing or difficulty breathing
- lightheadedness or fainting
- tingling, numbness in the hands or feet
- fever, chills or sore throat

Tell your doctor or pharmacist if you have these side effects:

- dizziness
- headache
- dry mouth
- tiredness
- difficulty sleeping
- mood changes
- gastrointestinal upsets such as; constipation, nausea and/or vomiting, bloating

The list of side effects is **not** complete. Tell your doctor or pharmacist if any of these side effects are a concern to you.

## Other Medication

Tell your doctor or pharmacist if you are taking any other medicines, including herbal or complementary products or medicines you can buy without a prescription.

Mesalazine can interact with other medicines, such as:

- warfarin - can reduce the effect of warfarin, your INR (International Normalising Ratio) will need to be monitored regularly
- azathioprine or mercaptopurine - may increase the toxic effects of these medicines, additional monitoring of your white cell count may be required

## Storage

Keep all medicines out of reach of children.

**Read this leaflet and discuss any questions you have about your medicines with your doctor or pharmacist.**