

Aspirin●

What is aspirin?

Aspirin (acetylsalicylic acid) is a pharmaceutical drug used to reduce pain^{1,2} or inflammation.³ It is classified as a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID).

Aspirin can be used to treat:

- mild to moderate pain
- fever
- swollen, red and tender body tissues
- rheumatoid arthritis
- rheumatic fever.⁴

It is also used in the prevention of blood clots, heart attacks, strokes and bowel cancer.⁵⁻⁸ However, while some studies have found that aspirin can reduce the likelihood of heart attacks and bowel, stomach and oesophageal cancer; experts still advise that clinicians exercise caution when using aspirin as a preventative measure, as it can increase the risk of bleeding and damage the stomach.⁹⁻¹¹ People with kidney disease, liver damage or haemophilia should consult a doctor before using aspirin.^{12,13}

Some people use aspirin to get 'high', or as an act of self-harm by intentionally taking more than the recommended dose.¹⁴

Aspirin is usually swallowed and comes in different forms including:

- tablets
- capsules
- suppositories
- soluble powders and tablets
- liquids.⁴

Other names

Aspirin may also be known by its brand or trade names. Some common examples include:

Generic name	Brand names
Aspirin	Aspro Clear®, Disprin®
Aspirin and codeine	Aspalgin®, Codral Cold & Flu Original®

Effects of aspirin

There is no safe level of drug use. Use of any drug always carries some risk – even medications can produce unwanted side effects. It's important to be careful when taking any type of drug.

Aspirin affects everyone differently, based on:

- size, weight and health
- whether the person is used to taking it
- whether other drugs are taken around the same time
- the amount taken.

Side effects

The most common side effects of aspirin are:

- dizziness, ringing in the ears, blurred vision
- drowsiness, fatigue, depression
- thirst, sweating, fluid retention, swollen ankles
- abdominal discomfort or bloating
- nausea, heartburn, diarrhoea, constipation.⁴

Overdose

If the dose is too high, you might overdose. Call an ambulance straight away by dialling triple zero (000) if you have any of these symptoms (ambulance officers do not have to involve the police):

- headaches
- confusion
- fever
- deafness
- vomiting
- rapid and shallow breathing
- seizures
- stop breathing, coma and death.⁴

Long-term effects

It's best to discuss the side effects of long term use with a medical practitioner. However, regular use of aspirin may eventually cause:

- anaemia (low red blood cell count)
- easy bruising and abnormal bleeding
- inflamed stomach lining, stomach bleeding and peptic ulcers
- vomiting blood that may look like coffee grounds and bowel motions that look like black tar
- an allergic-type reaction, wheezy breathing and a tightness in the chest in adults, hives in children, and in some rare cases swelling of the face, lips, tongue or around the eyes
- reduced kidney and liver function.¹²

Using aspirin with other drugs

The effects of taking aspirin with other drugs, including alcohol, prescription medications and other over-the-counter medicines, are often unpredictable.

Aspirin + alcohol: can increase the risk of stomach irritation and discomfort.⁴

Aspirin + warfarin or some blood pressure medicines: may increase the risk of bleeding.⁴

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Always call an ambulance on triple zero (000) if an overdose is suspected: tell the paramedic exactly what has been taken. Paramedics are there to help and will not involve the police unless there is a danger to themselves or others.

Other help, support services and resources

Links to further help and support • adf.org.au/help-support/

● Further information

DrugInfo • 1300 85 85 84

Free confidential information and advice about alcohol and other drugs (9am - 5pm, Mon-Fri)

Family Drug Help • 1300 660 068 • www.familydrughelp.com.au (Victorian-based)

Services are available to support those around you who may be affected by your drug use. As well as providing understanding, they can provide information about how best to help during treatment.

Family Drug Support • 1300 368 186 • www.fds.org.au (Australia-wide)




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