



University Hospitals Bristol **NHS**

NHS Foundation Trust

Patient information service
Bristol Heart Institute
Adult congenital heart disease

Aspirin



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What is aspirin for?

Aspirin reduces the 'stickiness' of blood cells called platelets. When you cut yourself, these platelets stick to each other (clot) to seal the wound. Sometimes platelets stick to each other inside a blood vessel – this is called a thrombus. A thrombus can block a blood vessel, and this is often the cause of a stroke or heart attack.



You may be prescribed aspirin for a period of time after having a new device fitted. This is to help prevent a blood clot forming on your new device.

You may be given aspirin after heart surgery to reduce the risk of blood clots. It may also be recommended for those who are at high risk of having a stroke.

How is it to be taken?

Low-dose aspirin is available on prescription, or you can buy some brands at pharmacies without a prescription.

You may take aspirin at whatever time of day you find easiest to remember, but try to take your doses at the same time each day. Most people prefer to take it in the morning with breakfast, as they find this helps them to remember to take it.

Dispersible tablets of aspirin should be taken with, or straight after, a meal or snack. This helps to reduce the risk of any stomach irritation. Gastro-resistant (also called enteric-coated or EC) tablets can be taken before food, as they have a special coating that will help to protect your stomach from irritation.

If you have been given dispersible tablets, take each of your doses stirred into a small glass of water.

If you have been given gastro-resistant tablets, swallow these whole – do not chew them unless your doctor has told you otherwise. You can take them with a drink of water to help you swallow.

If you forget to take a dose, take it as soon as you remember. If you do not remember until the following day, skip the missed dose. Do not take two doses together to make up for a forgotten dose.

Before taking aspirin

Before you start taking aspirin, it is important that your doctor or pharmacist knows:

- **if you are pregnant, trying for a baby or breastfeeding**
- if you are under 16 years of age
- if you have ever had a peptic ulcer (stomach ulcer)
- if you have asthma
- if you have liver or kidney problems
- if you have high blood pressure
- if you have a blood disorder such as haemophilia
- if you have ever had an unusual or allergic-type reaction after taking aspirin or a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory
- if you are taking other medicines, including those available to buy without a prescription, herbal and complementary medicines
- if you have ever had an allergic reaction to any other medicine.

Are there any side effects?

Common aspirin side effects include feeling sick and indigestion.

If you experience this, stick to simple foods and take your dose of aspirin after a meal. If this continues, speak with your doctor, who will be able to prescribe something to protect your stomach.

Important: aspirin may cause allergic reactions; this is more common in people who have asthma. Stop taking aspirin and speak with a doctor urgently if you have any difficulties breathing.

If you experience any unusual bleeding or any other symptoms which you think may be due to these tablets, speak with your doctor or pharmacist.

Uncommon or rare side effects

Other, rarer side effects of aspirin may include:

- a runny nose
- headache
- ringing in the ears (tinnitus)
- vertigo
- a raised, itchy rash on the skin (hives)
- nausea or vomiting
- worsening of asthma caused by narrowing of airways
- inflammation (swelling) of the stomach
- bleeding in the stomach
- bruising.

Be aware...

You should not take other preparations which contain aspirin while you are on these tablets; nor should you take any non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs such as ibuprofen. Many painkillers and cold and flu remedies contain aspirin or ibuprofen, so these should be avoided.

Website for more information

<http://www.patient.co.uk/medicine/aspirin-anti-platelet.htm>

Please note that if for any reason you would value a second opinion concerning your diagnosis or treatment, you are entirely within your rights to request this.

The first step would usually be to discuss this with the doctor or other lead clinician who is responsible for your care.

Smoking is the primary cause of preventable illness and premature death. For support in stopping smoking contact **Smokefree Bristol** on **0117 922 2255**.

As well as providing clinical care, our Trust has an important role in research. This allows us to discover new and improved ways of treating patients.

While under our care, you may be invited to take part in research. To find out more please visit:
www.uhbristol.nhs.uk/research-innovation
or call the research and innovation team on
0117 342 0233.

For access to other patient leaflets and information please go to the following address:

www.uhbristol.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/information-for-patients/

Hospital switchboard: 0117 923 0000



Minicom: 0117 934 9869



www.uhbristol.nhs.uk



For an interpreter or signer please contact the telephone number on your appointment letter.



For this leaflet in large print, audio or PDF format, please call the patient information service:



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