

MESALAZINE

Brand names Asacol, Ipcol, Mesren MR, Mezavant XL, Octasa, Pentasa, Salofalk

Used in the following combined preparations None

GENERAL INFORMATION

Mesalazine is prescribed for patients with ulcerative colitis and is sometimes used for Crohn's disease, which affects the large intestine. The drug is given to relieve symptoms in an acute attack and is also taken as a preventive measure. When mesalazine is used to treat severe cases, it is often taken with other drugs such as corticosteroids.

When the drug is taken as tablets, the active component is released in the large intestine, where its local effect relieves

the inflamed mucosa. Always stick to the same brand of tablet. Enemas and suppositories are also available and are particularly useful when the disease affects the rectum and lower colon.

This drug produces fewer side effects than some older treatments, such as sulfasalazine. Patients unable to tolerate sulfasalazine may be able to take mesalazine with no problem. Anyone hypersensitive to salicylates, such as aspirin, should not take mesalazine.

QUICK REFERENCE

Drug group Drug for inflammatory bowel disease (p.70)

Overdose danger rating Low

Dependence rating Low

Prescription needed Yes

Available as generic No

INFORMATION FOR USERS

Your drug prescription is tailored for you. Do not alter dosage without checking with your doctor.

How taken/used



Tablets, SR tablets, granules, suppositories, enema (foam or liquid).

Frequency and timing of doses

3 x daily, swallowed whole and not chewed (tablets); 3 x daily (suppositories); once daily at bedtime (enema).

Adult dosage range

2.4–4g daily (acute attack); 1.2–2.4g daily (maintenance dose). Dose varies with brand used.

Onset of effect

Adverse effects may be noticed within a few days, but full beneficial effects may not be felt for a couple of weeks.

Duration of action

Up to 12 hours.

Diet advice

Your doctor may advise you, taking account of the condition affecting you.

Storage

Keep in original container at room temperature out of the reach of children. Protect from light. Keep aerosol container out of direct sunlight.

Missed dose

Take as soon as you remember. If your next dose is due within 2 hours, take a single dose now and skip the next.

Stopping the drug

Do not stop taking the drug without consulting your doctor; symptoms may recur.

Exceeding the dose

An occasional unintentional extra dose is unlikely to be a cause for concern. But if you notice any unusual symptoms, or if a large overdose has been taken, notify your doctor.

SPECIAL PRECAUTIONS

Be sure to tell your doctor if:

- You have long-term liver or kidney problems.
- You have a blood disorder.
- You are allergic to aspirin.
- You are taking other medicines.



Pregnancy

Negligible amounts of the drug cross the placenta. However, safety in pregnancy is not established. Discuss with your doctor.



Breast-feeding

Negligible amounts of the drug pass into the breast milk. However, safety is not established. Discuss with your doctor.



Infants and children

Not recommended under 15 years.



Over 60

Dosage reduction not normally necessary unless there is kidney impairment.



Driving and hazardous work

No special problems.



Alcohol

No special problems.

POSSIBLE ADVERSE EFFECTS

The common side effects of mesalazine are on the gastrointestinal tract. Other problems rarely occur. However, unexplained bleeding,

bruising, sore throat, fever, or malaise should be reported to your doctor, who will carry out a blood test to eliminate blood disorders.

Symptom/effect	Frequency		Discuss with doctor		Stop taking drug now	Call doctor now
	Common	Rare	Only if severe	In all cases		
Nausea	●		●			
Abdominal pain	●		●			
Diarrhoea	●		●			
Colitis worsening		●		●	●	
Rash		●		●	●	
Fever/wheezing		●		●	●	●
Spontaneous bleeding/bruising		●		●	●	●
Sore throat/malaise		●		●	●	●

INTERACTIONS

Lactulose The release of mesalazine at its site of action may be reduced by lactulose.

Warfarin Mesalazine may reduce the effect of warfarin.

Azathioprine and mercaptopurine may increase the risk of blood problems with mesalazine.

PROLONGED USE

No problems expected.

Monitoring Regular blood tests and checks on kidney function are usually required.