

PATIENT INFORMATION SHEET

Mesalamine Compounds for Inflammatory Bowel Disease (brand name = Asacol[®], Mesasal[®], Salofalk[®], Pentasa[®])

What is Mesalamine?

Mesalamine is a medication which acts locally on the small and large bowel to reduce inflammation.

When is it used?

Mesalamine compounds are coated to release the medication at different targets along the gastrointestinal tract.

- Asacol[®], Salofalk[®], and Mesavant[®] are targeted for release in the large bowel (colon).
- Pentasa[®] is targeted to be released along the length of the small intestine (very last part) and large bowel.
- Salazopyrin[®] (sulfasalazine) is a drug in which the mesalamine is attached to a sulpha drug. The bond between the sulpha and the mesalamine is broken by the bacteria present in the large bowel. However, sulpha component causes many of the side effects of Salazopyrin.

Your doctor will choose the correct mesalamine drug depending upon the location of your IBD.

How is Mesalamine given?

The mesalamine compounds are taken by mouth. These are generally taken three to four times a day. They may also be found in the form of topical therapies (liquid enemas or solid suppositories that are inserted into the anus).

What are topical therapies?

Topical therapies coat the lining of the bowel, to help the body heal and provide relief to the urgency and bleeding. If you are prescribed these it is important to take them as prescribed for best effect. This is similar to putting cream or ointment on the skin after a burn or rash.

What are the side effects of Mesalamine?

There is a long list of side effects of Salazopyrin, thought to be due to the sulpha component. About one person in three will have side effects. These are usually mild but occasionally patients will develop inflammation of the pancreas or abnormalities in the kidneys. The new targeted mesalamine compounds are generally free of side-effects, but may be associated with mild rash, indigestion or headache. Some patients have reported a discolouration of the urine, thought to be from the color coating in the tablets. Occasionally the outer shell of the tablets may be passed in the stool, but the medication inside would already be working.

How will I know if I am getting a side effect?

If you develop a rash, indigestion or headache or a worsening of your bowel symptoms, you may wish to consult with your physician to determine whether this is possibly the result of the medication. These side effects are usually not serious and quickly stopped when the dose of medication is reduced or discontinued.