

5-Aminosalicylate (5-ASA) for Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD)

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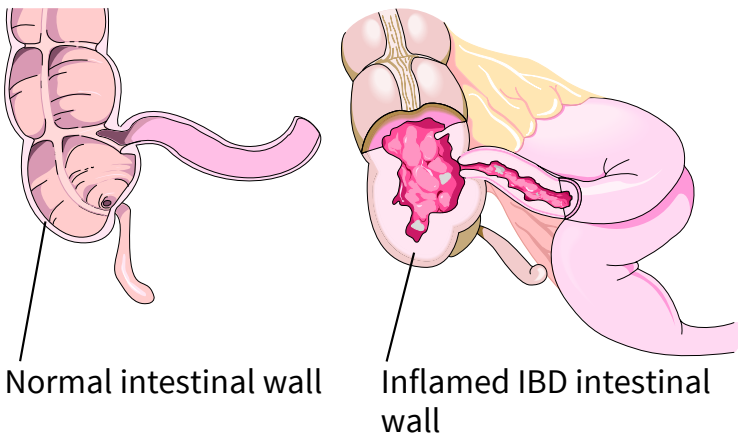
What is 5-aminosalicylate (5-ASA)?

5-ASA is a medication often used to treat inflammatory bowel disease (IBD). It helps to control active ulcerative colitis, or Crohn's colitis and keep mild to moderate ulcerative colitis in remission (period of recovery). Brand names for 5-ASA include:

- › Asacol®
- › Mezavant®
- › Pentasa®
- › Salofalk®
- › Dipentum®

What does 5-ASA do?

5-ASA lowers inflammation (swelling) in the lining of the bowel caused by IBD. This may help other IBD symptoms, like diarrhea (loose, watery poop) and cramping.



Which 5-ASA should I take?

Your IBD health care provider will help you find the right 5-ASA for you. Which drug you take and how much will depend on:

- › where in your body the disease is.
- › how bad it is.

How do I take 5-ASA?

- 5-ASA comes as a:
 - › Tablet – taken orally (by mouth)
 - › Suppository – inserted (put) in the rectum (bum)
 - › Enema – foam or liquid inserted in the rectum using an applicator
- If you have proctitis (colitis of the rectum) or colitis of the last metre of the bowel, a 5-ASA suppository may work better than a tablet.

Can I take other medications?

- Talk with your health care provider before taking any new medication while taking 5-ASA.
- **Tell your health care provider if you are allergic to aspirin.** 5-ASA and aspirin have some chemicals in common.

How will 5-ASA help?

- The goal of treatment is to lower inflammation in the gastrointestinal tract (path that food takes through your body). Inflammation is what causes the symptoms of IBD.
- 5-ASA helps to lower the number of flare-ups and keep your IBD in remission.
- How much and how fast 5-ASA helps will depend on which 5-ASA you are taking, the dose, and how bad your disease is.
- You may see improvements 3 days after starting treatment, but it may take up to 3 weeks. Oral tablets or pills may take longer to work than enemas and suppositories.
- Health care providers often try 5-ASA first to treat mild to moderate bowel inflammation. Sometimes it does not help or work.
Contact your IBD health care provider if your symptoms do not get better after taking 5-ASA for about a month. Your treatment may need to be changed.
- If at any time your symptoms get worse while taking 5-ASA, please contact your IBD health care provider.

What are the possible side effects of 5-ASA?

Like any medication, 5-ASA has possible side effects. Most people do not have problems with 5-ASA. The type and dose of 5-ASA may affect any side effects you may experience.

Talk to your health care provider if you have:

- › Headache
- › Dizziness
- › Diarrhea (it can help to start taking the drug slowly and take it with food)
- › Constipation (not able to poop)
- › Abnormal bloodwork results
- › Gas
- › Sore throat that does not go away
- › Hair loss
- › Acne (pimples), mild to severe
- › Skin rash/irritation
- › Belly pain, nausea (upset stomach)

Rare side effects:

- In less than 1% of people, side effects can happen that may be serious. These include:
 - › Inflammation of the lung (pneumonitis)
 - › Inflammation of the tissue around the heart (pericarditis)
 - › Inflammation of the pancreas (pancreatitis)
 - › Worse inflammation of the bowel (colitis)

- › Inflammation of the kidney: This can be found through routine bloodwork during the first few months of treatment.

These side effects are very rare and usually get better when you stop taking the medication.

In general, the possible benefits of taking this medication outweigh the risks.

Use the space on the back cover to write down your questions or concerns for your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist.

How long will I need to take 5-ASA?

- 5-ASA is a maintenance drug. This means it is usually used long term to control symptoms, lower the number of flare-ups, and help you stay in remission.
- **It is important to take your medication as prescribed.** You may have a higher risk of flare-ups if you stop treatment or change the way you take your medication.
- After many years of being well, it may be possible to taper (lower slowly over time) your dose. **It is important to talk about this with your health care provider.**

Notes:

Looking for more health information?

Find this pamphlet and all our patient resources here: <https://library.nshealth.ca/PatientEducation>
Contact your local public library for books, videos, magazines, and other resources.
For more information, go to <http://library.novascotia.ca>
Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time: call 811 or visit <https://811.novascotia.ca>
Learn about other programs and services in your community: call 211 or visit <http://ns.211.ca>

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The information in this pamphlet is to be updated every 3 years or as needed.

