

Oxford Radcliffe Hospitals 
NHS Trust

Oxford Children's Hospital
Paediatric Gastroenterology Department

Mesalazine
(Pentasa®, Asacol®, Salofalk®)
Olsalazine (Dipentum®)

Information for patients and parents

Medicines Information

This information leaflet answers common questions parents or patients ask about their medicine. Further information can be found in the information leaflet supplied by the manufacturer, or ask your pharmacist or doctor.

Why have I been started on this medicine?

Mesalazine/Olsalazine has a major role in maintaining remission of ulcerative colitis. Crohn's disease may also benefit from treatment with mesalazine and it is often used to help reduce the chances of Crohn's disease recurring after operations.

You should not interchange different brands of mesalazine, unless instructed by your doctor.

How does it work?

Mesalazine/Olsalazine belongs to a group of medicines called aminosalicylates or 5-ASA drugs. They act on the inflamed lining of the gut (intestine) to prevent the formation of substances that cause inflammation. Each aminosalicylate formulation releases active drug in different parts of the intestine. Therefore different preparations of aminosalicylates are used depending on the pattern of inflammation.

Pentasa® releases active drug slowly throughout the entire small intestine and colon.

Asacol® releases active drug in the last part of small intestine and colon.

Salofalk® releases active drug in the distal part of small intestine and colon.

Dipentum® releases drug in the colon when split by bacteria into 2 molecules of 5-ASA.

How long does it take to work?

Mesalazine/Olsalazine does not work straight away. In order to remain in remission, you must continue to take it even if you feel well. Mesalazine is sometimes used to treat a mild attack, and is most effective for limited colitis when given as a suppository or enema.

What dose do I take?

Higher doses are used in acute attacks and lower doses are used to maintain remission. Most patients take 1-3g per day.

How do I take it?

Each brand of mesalazine comes in different strength tablets or granules.

Pentasa® comes as grey 500mg strength slow release tablets. The tablets may be dispersed in water, but should not be chewed or crushed. Pentasa® is also available in granules, liquid enemas and suppositories.

Asacol® comes as red 400mg strength enteric coated (this means they have a special coating which is not destroyed by acids in the stomach) tablets. They should be swallowed whole and not chewed. You should not take indigestion remedies at the same time as Asacol® tablets. Asacol® is also available as suppositories and foam enemas.

Salofalk® comes as yellow 250mg enteric coated tablets. They should be swallowed whole and not chewed. You should not take indigestion remedies at the same time as Salofalk® tablets. Salofalk® is also available as suppositories and liquid enemas.

Dipentum® comes as brown capsules which can be opened and the contents sprinkled on food.

How long will I be taking it?

If tolerated, you will probably remain on Mesalazine/Olsalazine indefinitely while your disease remains in remission. Do not stop taking your medicine unless your doctor tells you to, even if you feel well.

What are the side effects?

The most common side effect of Mesalazine/Olsalazine is headache, and this is the main reason why some patients cannot take the drug. Also common are indigestion, nausea and watery diarrhoea, as well as mild allergic reactions such as rash, itchiness and fever. Generally however, mesalazine is very well tolerated with 80% of patients experiencing no side effects.

Very rarely, these drugs can affect the liver, lungs, pancreas, kidneys and production of blood cells in the bone marrow (causing bleeding, bruising, sore throat, fever, malaise).

Do I need blood tests?

Mesalazine/Olsalazine has very occasionally been reported to cause blood disorders. We suggest that a blood count, electrolytes, urea, creatinine & liver function tests are done every 3 months for the first year and every 6 months thereafter, at your GP surgery.

What do I do if I experience side effects?

If you experience any signs of illness or side effects such as unexplained bruising, bleeding (e.g. nosebleeds or spots under your skin), sore throat, fever or malaise, contact your doctor immediately.

What happens if I forget to take a dose?

If you forget to take a dose at the right time, take it as soon as you remember. Then go on as before, but do not take two doses within one hour or so of each other. If you take too much Mesalazine/Olsalazine, tell your doctor immediately.

Does mesalazine interfere with my other medicines?

Most other drugs can be taken safely, however always check with your doctor or pharmacist first.

It is safe to drink alcohol in moderation while you are on Mesalazine/Olsalazine, but it may aggravate any nausea.

How to contact us

If you have any questions you may contact the Paediatric Gastroenterology Specialist Nurses:

Tel: 01865 234002 for queries.

**Keep all medicines out of the reach of children.
Never give any medication prescribed for you to anyone else. It may harm them even if their symptoms are the same as you**

If you need an interpreter or need a document in another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01865 221473** or email **PALSJR@orh.nhs.uk**

Adapted for paediatric use by Rhoda Welsh, Pharmacist
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