



Acetylsalicylic Acid (ASA) Desensitization

Information for Patients

What is ASA Desensitization and why am I having it?

Acetylsalicylic Acid (ASA) is an important therapy for many cardiology patients, but hypersensitivity or allergy to the drug occurs in up to 20% of the population.

The Desensitization procedure consists of administering small, increasing doses of ASA while being closely monitored for signs and symptoms of an allergic reaction.

The goal is to allow you to take ASA 81mg daily with no allergic reaction.

What are the possible reactions?

Once you have completed the Desensitization procedure, the risk of an allergic reaction is very low as long as you continue to take ASA and *do not exceed a dose of 81mg*.

You should seek medical attention if you develop:

- rash/hives
- flushed skin
- facial swelling
- difficulty breathing or swallowing

What happens if I miss a dose of ASA?

You are still allergic to ASA; you have been desensitized to the 81mg dose.

It is important that you continue to take ASA every day following the desensitization procedure.

If you miss more than two days of ASA:

- inform a Doctor right away
- do not take any further ASA until instructed to do so

You will need to be monitored in a healthcare setting in order to safely resume taking ASA.

Is it safe for me to take any dose of ASA after desensitization?

No.

It is important to remember that *you can only safely take doses of ASA up to 81mg.*

Various over-the-counter products contain ASA at different doses. These should be avoided.

If you take an ASA dose greater than 81mg, there is a risk you could have an allergic reaction requiring medical attention.

Is it safe for me to take other Non-Steroidal Anti Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs) such as ibuprofen or naproxen?

These medications should generally be avoided if you have a heart condition that requires you to be on ASA.

Additionally, depending on your allergic reaction to ASA in the past, there is still a risk you could react to an NSAID despite completing an ASA desensitization procedure.

You should not take NSAIDs unless specifically prescribed to do so by your doctor.

How can I find out more?

If you have further questions or concerns, please speak to your doctor or pharmacist.