



Aspirin desensitisation

Created: February 2026
Next review: February 2027
Version 1

About this leaflet

This leaflet provides you with general information about aspirin desensitisation as, in the past, you have been identified as having a sensitivity reaction to aspirin.

Some patients are sensitive to aspirin, meaning they develop a harmful reaction when given this medication. This may include breathing, nasal/sinus and skin problems.

What is aspirin desensitisation and why am I having it?

Aspirin desensitisation is a procedure to build up your tolerance to aspirin. Your cardiologist feels that aspirin is an essential treatment for your cardiac condition, and it is recommended that you undergo aspirin desensitisation.

The aim is to enable you to take aspirin regularly without having a reaction to it.

If you have had a previous anaphylactic reaction (throat or tongue swelling, shortness of breath, light headedness and low blood pressure) or problems breathing when you have taken aspirin in the past, you **must** tell your doctor as you are not suitable for this procedure.

What can I expect to happen?

This procedure requires you to be an inpatient and you will need to stay overnight. If you are already an inpatient it will be done during your admission.

Before the procedure starts, a cannula (small needle) will be inserted into a vein. This will only be used to treat reactions if they occur and not for the desensitisation procedure.

During the procedure you will be given increasing doses of aspirin over a 3-hour period. This starts with a low dose that is too small to trigger a reaction, then you will be given slightly more aspirin every 30 minutes, slowly building up to higher doses.

This will train your body not to have a reaction to the aspirin and you will be monitored very closely for any signs of reaction throughout the procedure.

The following morning you will be given a dose of 75mg aspirin tablet. You should then continue to take aspirin daily until told otherwise.

You will also be required to sign a consent form before the procedure starts.

What are the possible reactions?

Aspirin desensitisation has been shown to be safe, however, it is possible that you may have a reaction during this procedure.

Symptoms can range from mild, such as itching and a rash, to more moderate such as wheezing and upset tummy, to more severe, which includes breathing difficulties and anaphylaxis.

What happens if I have a reaction?

You will be continually observed for any reaction. If at any time you experience a reaction to the aspirin the procedure will be stopped. A doctor will then assess and treat the reaction before deciding whether it is safe to continue.

In the unlikely event you have a delayed reaction once you are discharged home you should immediately call the ward where you had your procedure. In the case of anaphylaxis (feeling of light-headedness, tongue or throat swelling) or difficulty breathing you should call 999 immediately.

Do I need to stop any medications before this procedure?

Your cardiologist may ask you to stop certain medications 24 hours before the desensitisation.

These medications belong to the following classes:

- Beta-blockers (e.g. bisoprolol, atenolol)
- Angiotensin converting enzyme inhibitors (e.g. ramipril, perindopril)

Stopping these medications for 24 hours before the procedure is safe. You will be able to restart following the procedure.

What happens if I miss a dose of aspirin?

It is important that you continue to take aspirin 75mg tablets every day following this procedure. If you miss more than 2 doses of aspirin then you must inform a doctor and not take any further aspirin. If this happens the procedure will need to be repeated to ensure you can safely take this medication.

Where do I get my next supply of aspirin?

You will be discharged with a 28-day supply of aspirin 75mg tablets with further supplies are available from your GP. Ask your GP to write a prescription when you have at least a week supply left and take the prescription to your local pharmacy in good time.

Your GP will also need to update your records to state that you have been desensitised to aspirin.

How can I find out more?

Your agreement should be obtained before undergoing the procedure and being prescribed aspirin. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to your doctor or pharmacist.

