

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

5-Aminosalicylate (5-ASA) for IBD

Your inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) health care provider thinks that treatment with 5-aminosalicylate (5-ASA) may help you manage your IBD.

This pamphlet has basic information about 5-ASA. It can help you choose whether to use this treatment. It does not replace your IBD health care provider or pharmacist's instructions or information.

What is IBD?

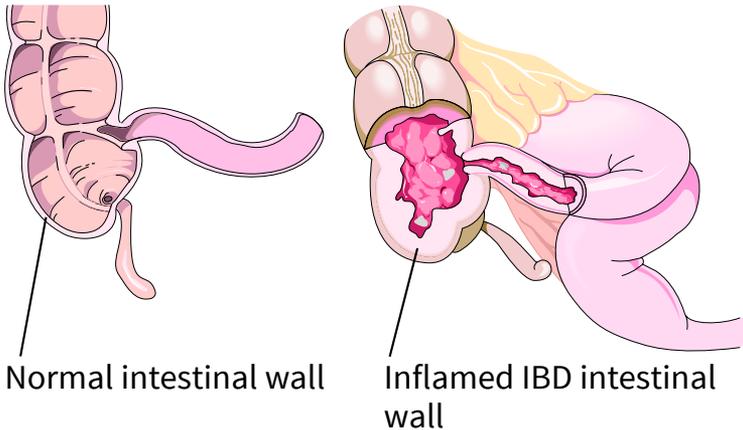
- In IBD, your immune system cannot tell the difference between foreign (from outside your body) substances and your body's own tissues. This can cause:
 - › Bowel inflammation (swelling)
 - › Bowel ulcers (sores)
 - › Diarrhea (loose, watery poop)
 - › Pain
- IBD is usually treated with medications that:
 - › Lower inflammation
 - › Suppress (lower) the immune system

What is 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
 - › Keep mild to moderate ulcerative colitis in remission (period of recovery)

What does 5-ASA do?

5-ASA lowers inflammation in the bowel lining caused by IBD. This may help other IBD symptoms, like diarrhea and cramping.



Which 5-ASA should I take?

- Your IBD health care provider will help you find the right 5-ASA for you. Which medication you take and the dose (amount) will depend on:
 - › Where in your body the disease is
 - › How bad the disease is

How do I use 5-ASA?

- 5-ASA comes as a:
 - › **Tablet** taken orally (by mouth)
 - › **Suppository** put into the rectum (bum)
 - › **Enema** foam or liquid put into 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.

Before you start taking 5-ASA

- **Do not start taking any new medications.** Medication interactions (how they affect each other) may raise your risk of serious side effects.
- **Tell your IBD 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 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
 - › 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.
- IBD health care providers often try 5-ASA first to treat mild to moderate bowel inflammation. Sometimes it does not help. **Talk with your IBD health care provider if your symptoms do not get better after taking 5-ASA for about 1 month.** Your treatment may need to be changed.
- **If your symptoms get worse while taking 5-ASA, talk with 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 any side effects.

- Your possible side effects may be affected by the type and dose of 5-ASA you take. **Talk to your IBD health care provider if you have:**
 - › Headache
 - › Gas
 - › Hair loss
 - › Skin rash or irritation
 - › Belly pain, nausea (upset stomach)
 - › Dizziness
 - › Constipation (not able to poop)
 - › Abnormal blood work results
 - › Sore throat that does not go away
 - › Mild to severe (very bad) acne (pimples)
 - › Diarrhea: it can help to start taking the medication slowly. It can also help to take it with food.

Rare side effects:

- There may be serious side effects in less than 1% of people taking 5-ASA. These include:
 - › Lung inflammation (pneumonitis)
 - › Inflammation of the tissue around the heart (pericarditis)
 - › Pancreas inflammation (pancreatitis)
 - › Worse bowel inflammation (colitis)
 - › Kidney inflammation: this can be found through routine blood work 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 at the end of this pamphlet to write down your questions or concerns for your IBD health care provider 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
 - › 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 your treatment or change the way you take your medication.
- After many years of being well, it may be possible to slowly lower your dose over time. **It is important to talk about this with your IBD health care provider.**

Notes:

This pamphlet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider. The information may not apply to all situations. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

Find all patient education resources here:
www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time:
Call 811 or visit: <https://811.novascotia.ca>

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