

Aspirin Dos and Don'ts



It's not hard to guess what the most widely used drug in America is. It's aspirin, with over 50 billion dollars spent on it yearly. Aspirin comes in tablets, chewing gum, capsules, or suppositories. It is also combined with other medicines in both prescription and over-the-counter drugs.

Because aspirin is really an acid (acetylsalicylic acid), it can be irritating to the stomach. For this reason, aspirin can be purchased in buffered form. This means it has been combined with an antacid-like magnesium carbonate. Enteric-coated aspirin—that is, tablets or capsules which have been treated with a special coating to prevent its release and absorption until the pill reaches the intestines—is even less irritating to the stomach. Taking plain aspirin with food will also help avoid stomach irritation.

Aspirin should be avoided under certain circumstances.

- During pregnancy, especially in the first and last trimesters. It can prolong labor and cause delivery problems. Do not take aspirin unless your doctor advises you to.
- Taken prior to surgery, aspirin can produce bleeding difficulties.
- If diabetics take aspirin regularly, their urine sugar tests may be affected with misleading results.
- Parents should not give aspirin or any medicine with salicylates to anyone under 19 years of age who has or is recovering from the chicken pox or flu. There is a definite link between aspirin used during these illnesses and Reye's syndrome, a nervous system disease that can be fatal.
- If you take aspirin regularly or in high doses, drinking alcoholic beverages may increase stomach irritation.
- People with asthma, kidney problems, gout, ulcers, or bleeding conditions should always check with a doctor before taking aspirin, which can aggravate these conditions.
- Always consult a doctor when considering aspirin in combination with prescription drugs like anticoagulants (blood thinners), oral diabetes medication, anti-gout drugs, and arthritis medications.