

Aspirin desensitisation

Information for patients



In the past you have been identified as having an allergic reaction to aspirin. However, your cardiologist feels aspirin is an essential treatment for your current cardiac condition and therefore you are offered 'Aspirin Desensitisation'.

What is aspirin desensitisation and why am I having it?

In this procedure we will administer small, increasing doses of aspirin whilst performing regular monitoring. The aim is to allow you to take daily aspirin with no adverse effects.

If you have had a previous anaphylactic reaction (throat or tongue swelling, shortness of breath, lightheadedness and low blood pressure) or problems breathing when you received aspirin 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. If you are an outpatient you will be sent an appointment to attend one of the cardiology wards.

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

A cannula (small needle) will be inserted into a vein; this will only be used to treat a reaction and not for the desensitisation. Starting with a very small dose you will be given increasing doses of oral aspirin (by mouth) every 15 minutes. You will be monitored very closely for any signs of reaction and before the next dose is given a range of observations will be taken.

Following an overnight stay you will be given a further dose of 75mg aspirin the following morning. You will be required to stay for one hour after this dose.

After this you will be able to go home and will be given a further 28 day supply of aspirin. Patients who require aspirin usually need to continue this long-term unless advised differently by their doctor.

Do I need to stop any medications before this procedure?

Your cardiologist will ask you to omit certain medications for 24 hours before the desensitisation.

These medications belong to the following classes:

- Anticholinergics (e.g. oxybutynin, etc)
- Antihistamines (e.g. chlorphenamine, loratadine etc.)
- Cromoglycate (e.g. sodium cromoglycate)
- Beta-blockers (e.g. bisoprolol, atenolol etc.)
- Angiotensin converting enzyme inhibitors (e.g. ramipril, perindopril etc)
- Tricyclic antidepressants (e.g. amitriptyline, doxepin etc)

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

What are the possible reactions?

Aspirin desensitisation has been shown to be very safe. However, it is possible that you may have a reaction during this procedure. Symptoms range from mild, such as itching and a rash, to more moderate such as wheezing and tummy upset, to more severe, which includes breathing difficulties and even possibly anaphylaxis.

What happens if I have a reaction?

You will be continually observed for any reaction. If at any time you do have a reaction to the aspirin the procedure will be stopped whilst a doctor assesses and treats the reaction. They will then decide whether it is safe to continue.

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

What happens if I miss a dose of aspirin?

It is important that you continue to take aspirin 75mg every day following this procedure. If you miss more than two 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 re-desensitise you.

Where do I get my next supply of aspirin?

You will be discharged with a 28 day supply of aspirin 75mg. 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 GP records to state that you have been desensitised to aspirin.

How can I find out more?

Your agreement should be obtained before prescribing any medicine. This leaflet has been written to provide general information about aspirin. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to your doctor or pharmacist.



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