








Sulphasalazine.

You have been prescribed **Sulphasalazine**.
This is a **Daily** medication.

	Morning (With food)	Evening (With food)
Week 1	 Sulphasalazine EN 500mg (one tablet)	
Week 2	 Sulphasalazine EN 500mg (one tablet)	 Sulphasalazine EN 500mg (one tablet)
Week 3	 Sulphasalazine EN 1000mg (two tablets)	 Sulphasalazine EN 500mg (one tablet)
Week 4 Onwards	 Sulphasalazine EN 1000mg (two tablets)	 Sulphasalazine EN 1000mg (two tablets)

Continue on **TWO** Sulphasalazine EN tablets twice daily until your next appointment. Make sure you have a blood test during week 4.

- You will need to have a blood test every month
- It may take 3 – 4 months before you feel better
- Make sure that you are prescribed 'EN' tablets

If you have any queries please contact the
Helpline number: 01793 604323

If you would like this information in another format, i.e. large print or another language, please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) department on 01793 604031

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Department: Rheumatology Department
Date produced: June 2011
Review date: June 2013
Leaflet number: PALS PiL - 0582

Patient Information

Can I drink alcohol while on sulfasalazine?

There is no particular reason to avoid alcohol while on sulfasalazine.

Fertility and Pregnancy

Sulfasalazine can cause a fall in sperm count, and so can lead to a temporary decrease in male fertility. This can be reversed if treatment is stopped. You should talk to your rheumatologist before trying for a baby.

It's safe for women to continue to use sulfasalazine when trying to conceive. If you're taking sulfasalazine while pregnant, the risks to the unborn child are very small. Sometimes it's recommended that sulfasalazine is continued through pregnancy to prevent a flare of disease.

You should talk to your doctor as soon as possible if you're planning a family, or if you become pregnant while taking sulfasalazine

What about breastfeeding?

Sulfasalazine is considered safe to use while you're breastfeeding unless the baby is premature or at risk of jaundice. Discuss your wish to breastfeed with your rheumatologist.

Where can I obtain further information?

If you would like any further information about sulfasalazine, or if you have any concerns about your treatment, you should discuss this with your doctor, rheumatology nurse or pharmacist.

Arthritis Research UK

Tel: 0870 850 5000

Website: www.arthritisresearchuk.org

Notes:

Sulfasalazine is a type of drug known as a disease-modifying anti-rheumatic drug, or DMARD. These drugs have the effect of dampening down the underlying disease process, rather than simply treating symptoms. Sulfasalazine is generally prescribed as Salazopyrin EN-Tabs. This is the brand name for sulfasalazine that is specially coated so that it does not dissolve quickly in the stomach.

Why is sulfasalazine prescribed?

Sulfasalazine can reduce the symptoms and slow the progress of rheumatoid arthritis and other types of arthritis, such as psoriatic arthritis. It may reduce the inflammation in your joints and decrease pain, swelling and stiffness.

When and how do I take sulfasalazine?

Sulfasalazine is taken in tablet form. The tablets should be taken with a glass of water. They should be swallowed whole and not crushed or chewed.

Your doctor will advise you about the correct dose. Usually you will start on a low dose, e.g. 500 mg (one tablet) daily, and your doctor will tell you how to increase the dose gradually. This is usually over a period of about 4 weeks. A typical dose would be 1 g (two tablets) twice daily. The dose may be adjusted according to the severity of your symptoms.

How long does sulfasalazine take to work?

Sulfasalazine does not work immediately. It may be at least 12 weeks before you notice any benefit.

What other treatments could be used instead of sulfasalazine?

A number of other drugs are used in the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis and related conditions. Your doctor will discuss these other options with you.

Will I need any special checks while on sulfasalazine?

Side-effects of sulfasalazine on the blood or liver may be picked up at an early stage by regular checks on your blood. Your doctor will arrange for you to have a blood test before you start treatment and then regular checks while on sulfasalazine. You may be asked to keep a record booklet with your blood test results, and you should bring this with you when you visit your GP or the hospital. **You must not take sulfasalazine unless you are having regular checks.**

What are the possible risks or side-effects?

The commonest side-effects of sulfasalazine are nausea (feeling sick), diarrhoea, stomach pain, dizziness, headache and rashes. These side-effects usually occur during the first 3 months of treatment.

Sulfasalazine can affect the blood count (one of the effects is that fewer blood cells are made). It can also affect your liver. You should tell your doctor or rheumatology nurse specialist straight away if you develop any of the following after starting sulfasalazine:

- a sore throat
- a fever
- any other symptoms of infection
- unexplained bruising
- any other new symptoms or anything else that concerns you.

You should stop sulfasalazine and see your doctor immediately if any of the symptoms listed above are severe.

Your urine may change colour (to orange) with sulfasalazine but this is nothing to worry about. Also sulfasalazine may stain soft contact lenses (and tears) yellow.

You should not take sulfasalazine if you are known to have a sulphonamide allergy.

Side-effects caused by sulfasalazine may clear up if the dose is reduced. This should be discussed with your doctor or rheumatology nurse.

Can I take other medicines along with sulfasalazine?

You should discuss any new medications with your doctor before starting them, and you should always tell any other doctor treating you that you are taking sulfasalazine.

Sulfasalazine is not a painkiller. If you are already on a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) or painkillers you can carry on taking these as well as sulfasalazine, unless your doctor advises otherwise.

Do not take over-the-counter preparations or herbal remedies without discussing this first with your doctor, rheumatology nurse or pharmacist.

What about immunisations?

You can have immunisations while on sulfasalazine.