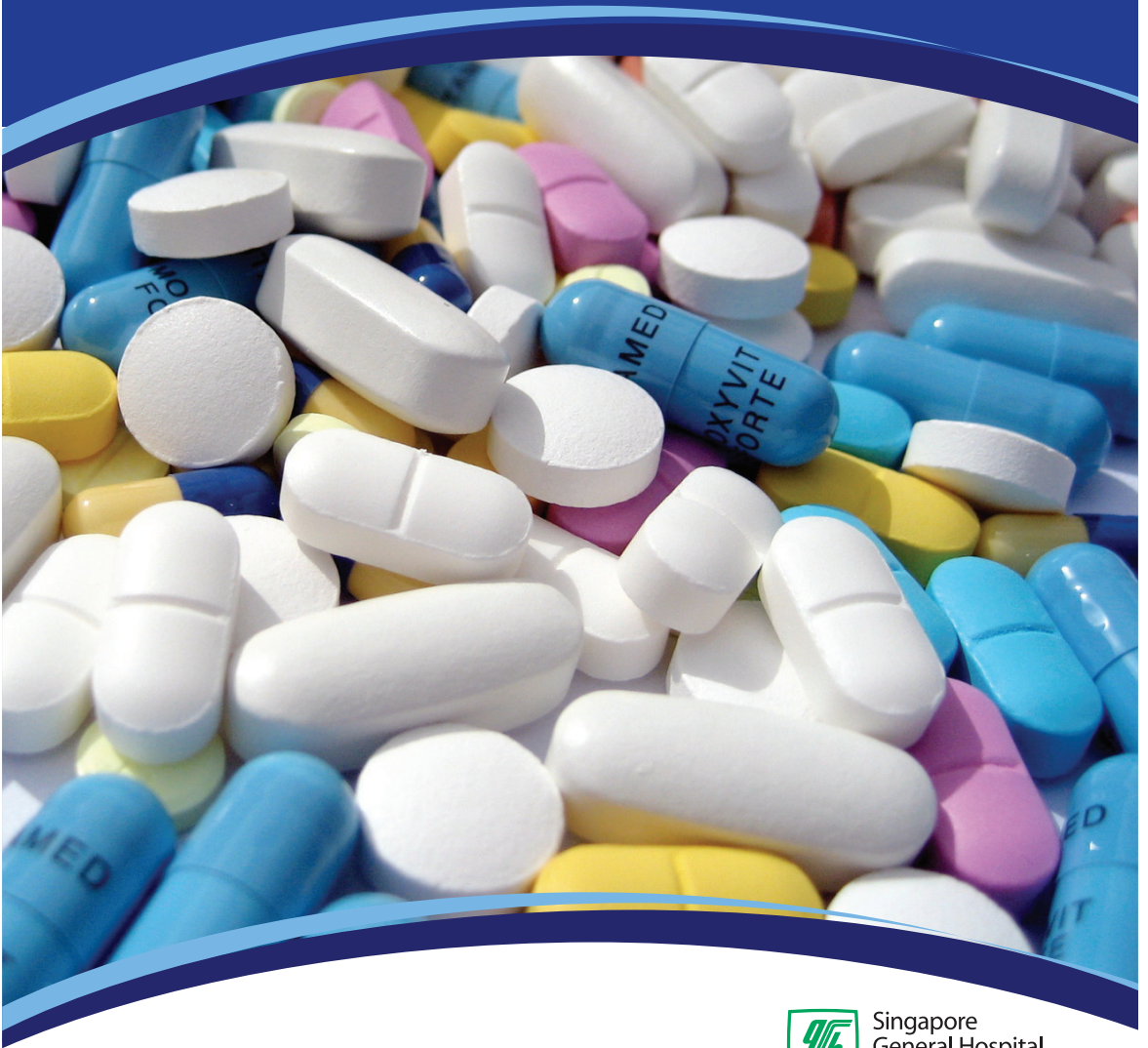


# Sulphasalazine



Singapore  
General Hospital  
SingHealth

**This leaflet only provides information for patients being treated with sulphasalazine (up to 3g/day).**

### **About your medicine**

- Sulphasalazine belongs to a group of medicines called aminosalicylate which is used to reduce pain and swelling in joint conditions e.g. rheumatoid arthritis.
- It is one of the disease-modifying-anti-rheumatic drugs (DMARDs) which can modify the progress of clinical disease by reducing permanent damage to joints caused by continuing inflammation.
- It may be combined with other DMARDs or biologic agents to control the disease.

### **How is the medicine given?**

- It is given orally, after food to prevent stomach upset, usually once, twice or even up to three times a day.
- A typical dose will range from 500mg to 3g a day, varying for each person depending upon factors such as activities of your disease and your response to the treatment.
- Sulphasalazine tablets should be swallowed whole, with a glass of plain water. The tablets should not be crushed or chewed.

### **How long does it take for the medicine to be effective?**

- It usually takes between 1 and 3 months to notice any improvement in symptoms after starting sulfasalazine.

### **What should I do when I am taking the medicine?**

- Come back to the hospital for regular blood test as instructed by your doctor as side effects can happen at any time during the course of treatment, and some of it may not show symptoms.
- Avoid prolonged exposure to sun and use sunscreen as this medicine may cause the skin to become more sensitive to sunlight.
- Avoid overcrowded places.

### **What should I do if I forget a dose?**

- If you have missed a dose, take it as soon as you remember.
- If it is almost time for your next dose, skip the missed dose and continue with your regular dosing schedule.
- Do not double the dose to make up for the missed dose.

## What are the possible side effects of the medicine?

- In general, most patients can take sulfasalazine with few side effects.
- The tablets may cause your urine to turn an orange colour and if you are wearing contact lenses, it may get stained. Do not be alarmed by these signs.
- Common side effects:
  - Nausea, vomiting
  - Loss of appetite
  - Dizziness, headache
- Rare side effects:
  - Allergy
  - Hepatitis
  - Inflammation of the blood vessels of the heart lining and muscles
  - Drop in blood counts
  - Ringing in the ears
  - Disturbed sleep
  - Depression and hallucinations

**If you notice any serious side effects, or other side effects not listed in this leaflet, please tell your doctor or pharmacist.**

## When do I seek immediate medical attention?

- Come back to the hospital if you have:
  - Signs of an allergic reaction such as rash, hives, itchy, blistered or peeling skin with or without fever, wheezing, tightness in the chest or throat, trouble breathing or talking, unusual hoarseness of voice, or swelling of the mouth, face, lips, tongue, or throat
  - High fever (exceeds 38°C) or other symptoms of infection such as chills, cough or painful urination
  - Feeling very tired or weak
  - Bits of tablet are seen in the stool
  - Excessive diarrhoea and/or vomiting despite taking medicine
  - Very bad skin irritation
  - Jaundice (yellowing of skin or whites of eyes)
  - Breathlessness

## Can I take other medicines or supplements?

- Your doctor may prescribe pain-relieving treatments since sulphasalazine is not a pain killer.
- Do not take iron pill/supplement within 2 hours after taking sulphasalazine.
- Always check with the doctor or pharmacist first before self-treatment with any over-the-counter medicines.
- Do not take any supplements, alternative or herbal medicines without informing your doctor or pharmacist.

## What special dietary instructions should I follow?

- Maintain adequate hydration (2 to 3 litres of fluid a day, unless otherwise advised by your doctor).
- Eat more nutritious food (frequent but small meals are preferred).
- Alcohol should be avoided if possible or kept to a minimum as suggested by your doctor because alcohol may increase the risk of liver toxicity associated with sulphasalazine.
- Do not consume raw or undercooked food.

## Can I start a family or breastfeed?

- Although sulphasalazine is not known to harm fetus growth and development, do inform your doctor if you are pregnant, preparing for pregnancy or breastfeeding.
- Sulphasalazine can lower sperm counts and motility. These will return to normal within 2 months after the drug is stopped. Please inform your doctor or pharmacist if you intend to start a family.

## How should I store the medicine?

- Keep the tablets away from heat, moist and direct sunlight.
- Keep all medicines out of reach of children.
- Do not dispose any medicines via wastewater or household waste. Ask your pharmacist how to dispose of medicines which are no longer needed. These measures will help protect the environment.

# In Summary

## What you need to know about sulphasalazine?

- Take sulphasalazine approximately at the same time every day, unless instructed otherwise by your doctor.
- Always come for your blood tests on the scheduled date.
- Beware of the side effects and know when to seek immediate medical attention.
- Do not take over-the-counter medicines, supplements or herbal medicines without checking with your doctor/pharmacist/advanced practice nurse first.
- For patients who intend to start a family, consult your doctor before you start the treatment.
- If you have any questions about the treatment, please discuss it with your doctor/advanced practice nurse at 65762418 or Pharmacist at 63265077.

Produced by  
Department of Pharmacy  
Department of Rheumatology & Immunology



Singapore  
General Hospital  
SingHealth

Outram Road  
Singapore 169608  
[www.sgh.com.sg](http://www.sgh.com.sg)

Reg. No.: 198703907Z  
Information correct as at August 2016

**PATIENTS. AT THE HEART OF ALL WE DO.®**

Printing supported by

