

# LOW DOSE ASPIRIN *in* PREGNANCY

## *Frequently asked questions*

If your midwife has talked to you about taking low-dose aspirin (LDA) during your pregnancy, you may have some questions. This handout answers some common questions about LDA in pregnancy. The information is not meant to replace medical advice or discussions with your health-care providers.



### What is LDA and why is it used?

Low-dose aspirin can help prevent or delay the start of a condition in pregnancy called preeclampsia. This serious but rare condition involves high blood pressure starting in the second half of pregnancy, and it can cause other problems for certain organs, such as the liver or kidneys. To learn more about preeclampsia, refer to our [Hypertensive Disorders of Pregnancy Handout](#).

Aspirin, or acetylsalicylic acid (ASA), is a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory (NSAID) medication in the same family of drugs as ibuprofen (Advil) and naproxen (Aleve). It is commonly used for minor pain, fever and inflammation or as a blood thinner. For pregnant people with risk factors for preeclampsia, aspirin can help improve the blood

flow of the placenta (the organ in the uterus that supplies oxygen and nourishment to the baby), which is needed for your baby to grow. This can help **prevent** or **delay** the development of preeclampsia, reducing risks to your baby's growth and the risk of organ damage for you.

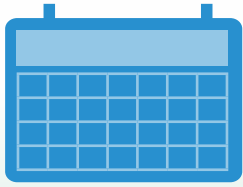
### Should I take LDA in my pregnancy?

Low-dose aspirin is recommended for people who have specific risk factors in pregnancy that make them more likely to develop preeclampsia. **There is no known benefit to taking LDA if you do not have risk factors.** LDA may be beneficial if one or more of the risk factors listed below apply to you. (You may have other risks not in this list, which your midwife will discuss.)

#### Risk factors for preeclampsia

- ☐ High blood pressure or preeclampsia in a previous pregnancy
- ☐ Pregnant with more than one baby (twins or triplets)
- ☐ First pregnancy
- ☐ Last pregnancy more than 10 years ago
- ☐ Body mass index (BMI) above 30
- ☐ Family history of preeclampsia (such as a parent or sibling with preeclampsia)
- ☐ Over 40 years old
- ☐ Pregnant via assisted reproductive techniques (such as IVF)
- ☐ Lab results linked to higher risk for preeclampsia
- ☐ Previous pregnancy with a low-birth-weight baby
- ☐ Autoimmune disorder (such as lupus)

## How and when should I take LDA?



Start taking LDA between 12-16 weeks of pregnancy (three-four months).



Take 1-2 tablets once a day (81-162 mg total) at bedtime throughout your pregnancy.



Stop taking LDA sometime between 36 weeks (nine months) of pregnancy and your estimated due date.

## Are there any risks when taking LDA?

It is safe to take LDA throughout your pregnancy if it is recommended by a health-care provider. Before taking any medication, tell your midwife if you have any allergies. Studies about LDA have found:

- Minimal side effects (most common is heartburn)
- No increased risk of bleeding after birth when stopped at approximately 36 weeks (nine months) of pregnancy
- No known risk to the baby's development when taking low dose (162 mg daily)

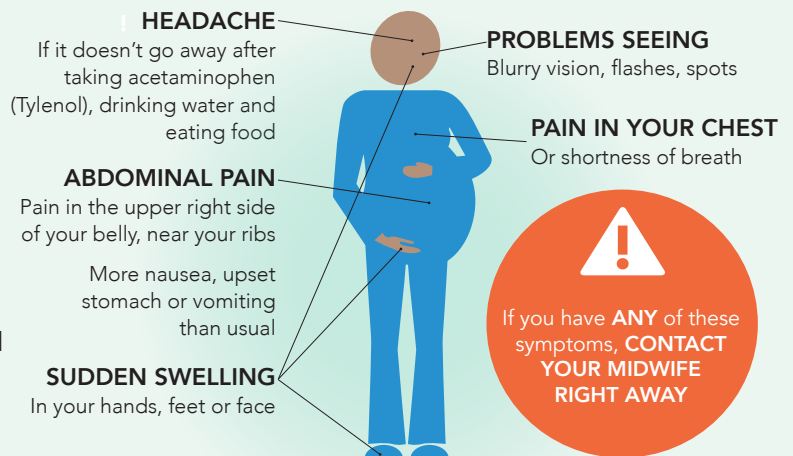
## Where do I get LDA? Do I need a prescription?

Low-dose aspirin is available at pharmacies as an over-the-counter medication (no prescription needed) or by prescription. Aspirin is not covered by the Ontario Drug Benefit (ODB) program. It is covered by Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) for First Nations and Inuit clients. Aspirin is also sold under the generic name acetylsalicylic acid (ASA). Generic and brand name medications are equally safe and effective for the prevention or delay of preeclampsia in pregnancy.

## What should I watch for while taking LDA?

If you are having any reaction to the medication, stop taking it and contact your midwife.

If you have any signs or symptoms of preeclampsia (see right), contact your midwife right away. Although taking LDA reduces the likelihood of preeclampsia, you could still develop it. You should watch for signs and symptoms in addition to attending regular prenatal appointments.



## Further resources

Preeclampsia Foundation – This charity provides information, video and infographics about the use of LDA for preventing preeclampsia. Available at <https://www.preeclampsia.org/aspirin>