Aspirin

Nurses can prescribe aspirin for mild to moderate pain

**GENERIC/PROPRIETARY NAMES**
- Aspirin: Caprin, Nu-Seals Aspirin.
- Many compound analgesic preparations contain aspirin.

**ACTION**
- Blocks pain impulses in the central nervous system, inhibits prostaglandin synthesis, causes peripheral vasodilation resulting in antipyretic properties, decreases platelet aggregation.

**INDICATIONS**
- Mild to moderate pain.
- Pyrexia.
- Secondary cerebrovascular or cardiovascular disease prevention.

**CONTRAINDICATIONS**
- Age under 16 years.
- Breastfeeding.
- Previous peptic ulceration.
- Haemophilus.
- Hypersensitivity, including asthma, angioedema, urticaria or rhinitis linked to aspirin or non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs).

**CAUTIONS**
- Asthma.
- Allergic disease.
- Impaired liver or kidney function.
- Dehydration.

**SIDE-EFFECTS**
- Side-effects are few and are mainly mild except for:
  - A high incidence of gastrointestinal irritation with slight asymptomatic blood loss;
  - Bronchospasm;
  - Increased bleeding time;
  - Possible skin reactions in hypersensitive patients.

**INTERACTIONS**
- Increased risk of bleeding with anticoagulants and selective serotonin re-uptake inhibitors (SSRIs).
- Decreased effects with high-dose antiacids and steroids.
- Possibility of increased side-effects with other NSAIDs.
- Increases the effects of warfarin, and other medication such as insulin, methotrexate and phenytoin.

**ADMINISTRATION**
- Nurse prescribers: oral only.
- Available as regular, coated, and extended-release tablets or capsules.
- Other preparations include chewable tablets, liquid form and dispersible tablets.
- Also available as a suppository.

**PATIENT TEACHING**
- Possible gastric irritation is limited by taking aspirin after food.
- Keep this medication in the container it came in, tightly closed, and out of reach of children.
- Store it at room temperature and away from excess heat and moisture (not in the bathroom).
- Store aspirin suppositories in a cool place or in a refrigerator.
- Take any missed doses as soon as you remember. But do not take a double dose to make up for a missed one.
- Do not break, crush, or chew extended-release tablets and do not open extended-release capsules. Swallow them whole.
- Always read the label of any over-the-counter medications to check for aspirin content.
- Restrict alcohol intake.
- Report any tinnitus, sweating or hyperventilation to the prescribing health care professional.

**NURSING CONSIDERATIONS**
- For patients who have had oral or dental surgery or tonsillectomy in the last seven days avoid chewable or dispersible aspirin tablets, or aspirin in crushed tablets or gargles.
- Assess pain and/or pyrexia one hour before or after medication.
- In long-term therapy monitor renal and liver function and oto-toxicity.
- Assess other medication for possible interactions – especially warfarin which is a special hazard.
- Be aware that aspirin is a common constituent of a variety of over-the-counter medications.

**REFERENCES**