

## **Sulphasalazine, SALAZOPYRIN EN® – in the treatment of rheumatic diseases**

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### **Indications**

Sulphasalazine is used for treatment of indications such as rheumatoid arthritis, ankylosing spondylitis (Bechterew's disease), joint inflammation associated with bowel disease and other long-term joint inflammation.

### **Drug product and mode of action**

Sulphasalazine is a combination of sulpha and salicylic acid. It soothes joint inflammation and prevents it from progressing.

### **Dosage and method of administration**

Sulphasalazine is used as 500 mg enteric-coated tablets in the treatment of rheumatic diseases. The tablets must be swallowed whole to avoid damaging their composition. To minimise adverse effects, dosing starts with a low dose, 1 tablet twice a day. The dose is gradually increased to 2–3 tablets twice a day. The tablets should be taken with meals with plenty of fluid. Sulphasalazine is not taken at the same time with methotrexate.

### **Adverse effects**

The most common adverse effects are abdominal discomfort, nausea and a feeling of fullness in the upper abdomen as well as headache. In very rare cases, the adverse effect appears as a rash with a fever. In that case, medication must be stopped at once and the treating doctor must be contacted. The adverse effects may include changes in blood count, such as reduction of white blood cells or elevated liver enzymes. The colour of urine may change during treatment.

### **Pregnancy and breastfeeding**

Sulphasalazine may be used during pregnancy and breastfeeding. During pregnancy, the use of folic acid, 1 mg x 1, is recommended as additional medication. Sulphasalazine may cause a temporary decrease in sperm production, which is why it is not recommended for men with fertility problems in the family. Once the drug is withdrawn, sperm production returns to normal.

### **Follow-up**

Safety tests are taken **2–3, 6 and 12 weeks after onset of treatment, and then once every 3–6 months**. The results are checked at the health centre. The safety tests include the following: **Basic blood count, B-NEUT and ALT. CREA, U-ChemScr, CRP and ESR** are measured in connection with treatment assessment before doctor's appointment every 6–12 months. Additional safety tests are taken 2-3 weeks after a dose increase.

## Other considerations

Sulphasalazine does not need to be stopped before or after surgery. Vaccinations can be given as normal.

**Link** [Reumalääkkeiden ohjeet | Reumatalo.fi | Terveyskylä.fi](#) (in Finnish)

[Wellbeing services county of Satakunta](#)