



HEALTH AFFAIRS

THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

1200 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1200

MAR 12 2009

MEMORANDUM FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE ARMY (M&RA)
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE NAVY (M&RA)
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE (M&RA)
DIRECTOR, JOINT STAFF

SUBJECT: Policy for Decreasing Use of Aspirin (Acetylsalicylic Acid) in
Combat Zones

Aspirin is a common and inexpensive over-the-counter medication that inhibits platelet aggregation, an essential step in the blood clotting process. The use of aspirin may increase blood loss immediately after injury, and has been documented to increase blood loss during surgical operation. Practices in stopping aspirin prior to surgery have changed in some instances because of other relative risks, but the most common cause of preventable death associated with combat injuries is blood loss. The intent of this policy, as with other changes in combat casualty care, is to reduce blood loss at the point of injury, and provide the widest margin of safety for evacuation of casualties to forward resuscitative or theater hospital level care.

Therefore, the Services will create and implement programs to ensure that all individuals, military and civilian, deploying to a combat zone, are advised during the pre-deployment process to stop taking aspirin, either alone or in combination remedies, at least 10 days before departure, unless advised by their health care provider to continue use. Your program should explain the dangers of the unnecessary use of aspirin to your health. If aspirin use is necessary for medical reasons, then such need should be documented in the medical record.

Access to aspirin in the combat zone should be controlled. There should be no over-the-counter access through Army and Air Force Exchange Service outlets or other Morale Welfare and Recreation activities. These activities are encouraged to stock over-the-counter alternatives (e.g. Acetaminophen (Tylenol®), Datril®), Ibuprofen (Motrin®, Advil®), and Naproxen (Aleve®)) for self-treatment of aches and pains that do not have significant effects on the blood clotting system. Medical units and each individual in the combat zone may carry stocks of aspirin for specific medical indications.

HA POLICY: 09-006

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cc:
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