

Pepto-Bismol (bismuth subsalicylate) basics

Relieves heartburn, upset stomach, and diarrhea. Pepto-Bismol (bismuth subsalicylate) can help for many stomach and intestinal problems, but may take longer to work compared to some other anti-diarrheal medicines.

What to expect when starting

Here's when people typically experience benefits as well as some possible side effects. Your experience may be different.

	Hours	Days	Weeks	Months	Long term
Pepto-Bismol (bismuth subsalicylate) Drug effectiveness	[Blue gradient bar]				
Possible side effects†	Hours	Days	Weeks	Months	Long term
Black tongue	[Red gradient bar]				
Black stool	[Red gradient bar]				
Ringing in the ears	[Red gradient bar]				
Confusion		[Red gradient bar]			
Headache	[Red gradient bar]				

† Data on frequency of side effects is not available.

Tips from pharmacists

- If you have the liquid product, make sure to shake well before use.
- Non-chewable pills should be taken with a full glass of water.
- Pepto-Bismol (bismuth subsalicylate) may cause your tongue and stool to become dark, this is normal. However, contact your doctor right away if you notice bloody stools, or if you are vomiting blood or a substance that looks like coffee grounds.
- Diarrhea can cause you to be dehydrated and lose electrolytes. Make sure to stay hydrated. Rehydration solutions are available over-the-counter. Speak to your doctor or pharmacist.
- Eating smaller meals and avoiding eating 3 hours before bedtime can help prevent heartburn.

Risks and warnings

Contact your doctor if you experience any of these.

Reye's syndrome

Pepto-Bismol (bismuth subsalicylate) contains an aspirin-like product called salicylate, which can cause a serious condition called Reye's syndrome that damages the liver and brain. Do not give to children or teenagers who have signs of the flu, chickenpox, or other viral infections, as this puts them at risk of Reye's syndrome.

Allergy to salicylates

Pepto-Bismol (bismuth subsalicylate) contains an aspirin-like product (salicylate). Talk to your doctor or pharmacist before using Pepto-Bismol (bismuth subsalicylate) if you have allergies to aspirin, salicylates, or NSAIDs (such as Advil, Aleve) to determine if this is a safe option for you.

Hearing problems

Pepto-Bismol (bismuth subsalicylate) may affect your hearing. This is more likely if you're taking a large amount of Pepto-Bismol (bismuth subsalicylate) and can be permanent. If you notice ringing in your ears or loss of hearing, stop taking this medication and contact your doctor right away.