

## ASPIRIN | THE HEADACHE TABLET



“Got a cold again, could not rest this afternoon and feel bad, mentally as well ... for supper, on K’s bed, I drank punch, which warmed my feet, and took aspirin. Recovery.” Thomas Mann wrote these lines in his diary on 25 November 1918. For him and many of his contemporaries, one drug had become synonymous with pain relief, a drug that had been synthesised 20 years earlier in a Bayer laboratory: Aspirin.

The effective agent “acetylsalicylic acid” – or ASS for short – was first synthesised in a chemically pure and stable form by Dr Felix Hoffmann. This is the only active agent in aspirin. Part of the compound had already been extracted from willow bark and synthetically reproduced by other scientists, and this stock had been known as a fever-reducing and pain-relieving agent since Hippocrates’ time. But these first chemical salicylic compounds had significant disadvantages: they were difficult to digest, did not keep and tasted revolting. However, the new Bayer drug made these side effects a thing of the past.

In 1899, the name Aspirin – formed from the initial letters of “acetylation” and the Latin name for a perennial containing salicylic acid “spiaraea ulmaria” – was registered as a trademark at the Imperial Patent Office in Berlin. The drug was launched onto the market the same year, initially in powder form. Soon after its successful introduction, it was sold as the first mass-produced tablet – securing its place in medicine cabinets up and down the country. Aspirin has even made it into space, when Neil Armstrong set foot on the moon in 1969, he had aspirin with him in his on-board pharmacy.

The development and marketing of aspirin opened a new chapter in the history of medicine, a chapter which has not yet finished by a long stretch. The active agent in the famous drug is still unchanged today.

However, the drug has fundamentally reshaped various treatment disciplines in recent years. Although it was known from the very outset that ASS could relieve pain, stop inflammation and reduce infection,

it was only in the Seventies that the many varied effects were discovered. Intensive, consistent research has also revealed the anti-thrombotic effect of ASS. It noticeably reduces lumpiness of the platelets in the blood, which are responsible for coagulating the blood. Although experiments in this area are not yet complete, it is clear that preventative treatment with aspirin significantly reduces the risk of some of the most frequent causes of death: for example, angina pectoris, non-fatal heart attack and stroke.

When Spanish philosopher Ortega y Gasset described the 20th century as the “era of aspirin” as early as the Thirties, he could never have suspected that the world-famous pain relief tablet would be more topical today than ever before. But all the new indications for aspirin will not replace the traditional use of the “medication of the century”. While other pain relief tablets do not stand up to the demands of the latest scientific methods, aspirin remains the standard in pain treatment.

What scientists have established and proved has been put into practice by consumers for decades. In more than 90 countries around the world, the answer to headaches is “Aspirin from Bayer”.



Company name Bayer HealthCare	Classic product Aspirin (since 1899)	Developer Dr Felix Hoffmann (1868–1946)	Awareness most famous drug in the world	Distribution worldwide	Main production sites Bitterfeld (GER), Myerstown (USA), Pilar (ARG)
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