

# Know Your NSAIDs (Nonsteroidal Anti-inflammatory Drugs)

NSAIDs are common pain relievers. While you may not recognize the word “NSAID,” you probably know many NSAIDs sold over-the-counter (OTC) by their generic or brand names:

- Ibuprofen, which is sold under brand names such as Motrin® and Advil®.
- Naproxen Sodium, which is sold under the brand name Aleve®.
- Aspirin, which is sold under various brand names.
- Combination medications that include an NSAID, such as Excedrin® (which contains aspirin).

There are also various NSAIDs you can get as a prescription from your health care professional.

## NSAIDs Can Provide Safe And Effective Pain Relief When Used Correctly

Common ways people take NSAIDs inappropriately include:

- Too high a dose (more pills or pills more frequently than directed).
- For too long.
- More than 1 kind of NSAID at the same time (prescription+OTC or OTC+OTC).

NSAIDs can cause side effects that harm your kidneys, heart and digestive system, among other things. Non-aspirin NSAIDs increase the risk of heart attack, heart failure, and stroke - and the risk is higher if you use more or for longer than directed. To help ensure your safety when taking NSAIDs:

- Use the lowest effective dose for the shortest period of time you require for relief.
- Do not take more than directed.
- Do not take multiple kinds of NSAIDs together.

## Take Charge of Your Health

Before taking an NSAID, you can help prevent problems by following these important steps:

- Know if you are taking an NSAID.
- Ask your health care professional or pharmacist if you have any questions about an NSAID (OTC or prescription), or if you're unsure if your medicine is an NSAID.
- Read and follow the entire label.
- Tell your health care professional if you routinely take OTC NSAIDs.
- If you take a prescription NSAID, talk to your health care professional or pharmacist about taking an OTC NSAID first.

Remember: NOT treating your pain can also cause serious health issues. NSAIDs can offer safe and effective pain relief. However, like all medicines – even commonly used ones – they must be taken appropriately.



Look for (NSAID) on the package.



Alliance for Rational Use of NSAIDs

A Public Health Coalition

[www.NSAIDAlliance.com](http://www.NSAIDAlliance.com)

MEMBERS OF THE ALLIANCE INCLUDE



AANP American Association of Nurse Practitioners

American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy (AACCP)

American Chronic Pain Association

healthy women

western PAIN society

National Kidney Foundation

EDUCATE before YOU MEDICATE National Council on Patient Information and Education

Jefferson School of Population Health

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# Understanding if OTC NSAIDs are right for you

✔ **Check the active ingredient**

✔ **Know the OTC daily limit**

For your safety, do not take more than this amount in 24 hours.

✔ **Consult the checklist**

NSAIDs are not appropriate for everyone.

## IMPORTANT

Different ingredients have different warnings. For complete warnings and information, check the Drug Facts label on your medicine carton.

✔ **Follow the directions**

## NSAIDs = Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs

**Ibuprofen**  
such as Motrin®  
IB, Advil®

**1,200 mg**

**Naproxen sodium**  
such as Aleve®

**660 mg**

**Aspirin**  
such as Bayer® Extra  
Strength, Excedrin®

**4,000 mg**

### Have you:

- ever had an allergic reaction or serious side effects from taking pain relievers?
- recently had heart surgery or are you about to have heart surgery?
- been advised to take aspirin to protect against heart attack or stroke?

### Do you:

- take prescription medicines for gout, diabetes, or arthritis?
- have an allergy to aspirin?

### Do you:

- have a history of stomach bleeding or stomach ulcers?
- have a history of stomach problems, such as heartburn?
- have kidney disease?
- have heart disease?
- have a history of stroke?
- have high blood pressure?
- have liver cirrhosis?
- have asthma?
- drink 3 or more alcoholic beverages every day?
- take prescription medicines, such as NSAIDs, diuretics, or blood thinning drugs (anticoagulants)?
- take other OTC medicines containing NSAIDs, including cough and cold or allergy products, sleep aids, and pain relievers?
- take steroids or have a condition that requires long-term steroid use?

### Are you:

- age 60 or older?

**If you checked any of these boxes, talk to your health care professional before taking an OTC NSAID, such as ibuprofen, naproxen sodium, or aspirin, because other pain relievers may be more appropriate for you.**

Directions are not just suggestions—they are meant to be followed. It is not safe to apply the dosing directions of one pain reliever to another.

- If you are taking a prescription NSAID:
- Take as prescribed.
  - Do not take an OTC NSAID at the same time as your prescription NSAID without talking to your health care professional first.

**NOTES** From your provider:



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