

# Know Your NSAIDs (Nonsteroidal Anti-inflammatory Drugs)

NSAIDs are common pain relievers. Although NSAIDs share some similarities, they have different levels of risk. While you may not recognize the word “NSAID,” you probably know many NSAIDs sold over-the-counter (OTC) by their generic or brand names:

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

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 one 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 AACP

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**  
Although NSAIDs share some similarities, they have different levels of risk.

✔ **Consult the checklist**  
NSAIDs are not appropriate for everyone.

✔ **Follow the directions**

**NSAIDs = Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs**

Non-Aspirin		Aspirin
<b>Ibuprofen</b> Ex.: Motrin® IB, Advil® <span style="font-size: 1.2em; font-weight: bold;">1,200 mg</span>	<b>Naproxen sodium</b> Ex.: Aleve® <span style="font-size: 1.2em; font-weight: bold;">660 mg</span>	Ex.: Bayer® Extra Strength, Excedrin® <span style="font-size: 1.2em; font-weight: bold;">4,000 mg</span>

**Do not use if you:**

- have had an allergic reaction to any pain reliever or fever reducer.
- recently had or are about to have heart surgery.

**Check if you:**

- take aspirin to protect against heart attack or stroke.
- have a history of heart attack, heart failure, or stroke.

**Do not use if you:**

- have had an allergic reaction to any pain reliever or fever reducer.

**Check if you:**

- take prescription medicines for gout, diabetes, or arthritis.

**Check if 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 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 age 60 or older.

*If you checked any of these boxes and have questions about how what you checked may affect your OTC pain reliever choice, **talk to your health care professional.** Use this checklist to guide your conversation.*

**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:

✔ **Know the OTC daily limit**  
For your safety, do not take more than this amount in 24 hours.

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

