

American Chronic Pain Association Using NSAIDs Safely and Effectively

Odds are that throughout the years you have used many types of medicine to fight pain and inflammation. NSAIDs are one type of pain reliever that most consumers are comfortable and familiar with. But the majority of people have no idea what an NSAID is. So what is an NSAID?

NSAID stands for Non Steroidal Anti Inflammatory Drug. That means that NSAIDs contain no steroid elements. They are also non-narcotic. In fact many of us consider them to be among the safest medicine that we can take. The most commonly used NSAIDs are Aspirin, Ibuprofen, and Naproxen Sodium -- although there are dozens more with less recognizable names. Typically they're sold over the counter, but prescription drugs also are often NSAIDs as well.

As you walk through a drug store you expect to find NSAIDs in many of the products sold in the pain relief aisle. What you may not expect however is that those same NSAIDs are also in cold and flu medicine as well as analgesic muscle creams and pain relief patches. In fact if you could tell which products contain NSAIDs your drug store shelves might look like this.

So it's easy to get more NSAIDs that are good for you. Recommended dose varies with specific the NSAID you're taking so ask your health care professional how much is safe for you. This is important because too many NSAIDs can irritate the stomach lining, cause bleeding, and occasionally lead to ulcers. There are also risks for your heart and kidneys. That's why the only safe way to use NSAIDs is to take the lowest effective dose for the shortest period of time.

So how do you use NSAIDs safely and effectively? The easy answer is, know what you're taking and how often you take it. What you don't know can hurt you. That sounds easy but think about this; you take your usual pain relief prescription, each dose contains an NSAID. But today you have a cold, so you take two pills for a headache and a dose of cold or flu relief medicine. You just added more NSAIDs to your body. Muscle rubs, pain patches, and prescription drugs can add even more NSAIDs to your daily quota. In a few hours you repeat the headache and cold medicines and take them once again before bed. And before you know you have taken way more than the safe and effective daily dose.

So how do you make sure you're using NSAIDs wisely? First, read the labels. Then, ask the pharmacist to help you make sure you choose over the counter medicines that work well with any prescription NSAIDs you may take. Remember your goal is to take the lowest effective dose for the shortest period of time. Be smart. Be safe. And get relief without harmful side-effects. When it comes to NSAIDs what you do know, can't hurt you.