



American College of Medical Toxicology

Physicians Specializing in the Care of Poisoned Patients

Ibuprofen and other NSAIDs

What are NSAIDs?

The abbreviation 'NSAIDs' stands for nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (medication). Medications that belong to this class help with the treatment of inflammation (swelling), pain, and fevers. Ibuprofen is one type of NSAID.

What medications are NSAIDs or contain NSAIDs?

Many over-the-counter and prescription medications other than ibuprofen also fall into the group of medications described as NSAIDs. Brand names of some of these medications include Advil[®], Bayer Select[®], Dayquil Sinus[®], Dimetapp Sinus[®], Dristan Sinus[®], Excedrin IB[®], IBU[®], Motrin[®], Motrin IB, Nuprin[®], Pamprin[®], and Aleve[®]. The 'generic' names for some commonly used NSAIDs include naproxen, aspirin, meloxicam, ketorolac, and diclofenac. There are many formulations of medications which contain NSAIDs (not all are mentioned here).

How much of an NSAID can I take?

The dose of medication that an adult should take depends on the specific type of NSAID. Common adult dosing for ibuprofen is 400 mg every 6 hours as needed. Prescription strength ibuprofen is higher than this. Read the bottle label or package instructions for dosing of each medication formulation.

Can I take multiple different types of NSAIDs at the same time?

You cannot take multiple types of NSAIDs at the same time. You should choose which medication to use and use only that medication unless you completely switch to another. It is important to always read the labelling of over-the-counter medications to avoid taking multiple products containing NSAIDs at the same time.

Can I take acetaminophen (Tylenol[®]) at the same time as an NSAID?

Yes. Acetaminophen and NSAIDs work differently in the body, so they are safe to take at the same time.

Can I take NSAIDs if I am pregnant?

Do not take NSAIDs while pregnant unless instructed to do so by your doctor.

Can I give NSAIDs to my child?

You can give NSAIDs to your child after they are 6 months of age. Read the instructions carefully before giving it to your child. If you have questions about dosing, ask your child's doctor or pharmacist.

Are NSAIDs dangerous?

NSAIDs can be dangerous if taken in excess or if you have stomach problems, kidney problems, or heart problems. If you have any concerns, ask your doctor whether NSAIDs are safe for you.

What happens if someone takes too much of an NSAID?

Most commonly, abdominal discomfort, nausea and/or vomiting can occur when someone takes too much of an NSAID. If you think you may have taken too much, or if you develop symptoms, talk with your doctor or call your regional poison center at 1-800-222-1222 for advice.

Created by Michelle Hieger, DO. These answers are provided by volunteer medical toxicologists for the purpose of public education, and do not necessarily represent the policies or positions of the American College of Medical Toxicology

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