

Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs)

What are NSAIDs and why are they prescribed?

- NSAIDs are a family of drugs that reduce pain by reducing inflammation. NSAIDs come in many forms: oral tablets/capsules; topical preparations; or injectable products. Some NSAIDs are available by prescription while others are available over-the-counter.
- The most common **acute pain** conditions that NSAIDs are used for include: menstrual pain; headache/migraine pain; and musculoskeletal injuries (such as a sprain or strain). NSAIDs may be used to manage pain following an operation.
- The most common **chronic pain** conditions that NSAIDs are used for include: mechanical back pain; osteoarthritis; and rheumatoid arthritis.

How should this medication be used?

- Usually, NSAID use for pain management starts out on an 'as needed' basis such as in the treatment of an acute migraine headache. In some chronic pain conditions, NSAID therapy may be used on a regular basis if it is providing good pain relief/functional benefit.
- The frequency of NSAID dosing depends on which NSAID is prescribed. For example, oral ibuprofen (Advil®) may be taken every 4-6 hours while oral naproxen (Aleve®) may be taken every 8-12 hours. When taken by mouth, NSAIDs should be taken with food to reduce the chance of stomach upset/nausea.

When does this medication start to work?

The pain-relieving effects of NSAIDs usually begin quickly (within a few hours). If there is swelling and warmth in the joints, it may take longer to notice improvement. In this case, it can take up to 2 weeks before you notice the full benefits.

What special precautions should I follow?

- Before using NSAID therapy talk to your doctor or pharmacist if you have had any of the following health issues:
 - Prior stomach/gastrointestinal ulcer or bleed, significant heartburn
 - Kidney or liver disease
 - Hypertension (high blood pressure)
 - Heart failure, prior heart attack/stroke or other cardiovascular conditions
 - Bleeding disorder
 - Are pregnant or breastfeeding or this situation is likely in the near future
 - Problems with high blood potassium levels

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- Tell your doctor and pharmacist about all of the medications you take (prescription, non-prescription, herbals, over-the-counter products, etc.) so drug interactions can be minimized.
 - Some over-the-counter items (e.g. cough and cold products) contain an NSAID. It is important to review the medicinal ingredients to prevent accidentally taking two NSAIDs at once.
 - If you take a “baby Aspirin (ASA 81mg)” daily, please discuss this with your health care provider. NSAIDs should be taken 2 hours or more after a “baby Aspirin” dose or at least 8 hours before a “baby Aspirin” dose.
- If you are prescribed oral ketorolac (Toradol®), the maximum duration for use is 5-7 days because of the risk of developing an ulcer or bleed.

What should I do if I forget a dose?

Take the missed dose as soon as you remember it unless it is almost time for the next dose. In this case, skip the missed dose and continue your regular dosing schedule. Do **NOT** take a double dose to make up for a missed dose

What side effects can NSAIDs cause?

The most important NSAID side effects to know about include:

- An increase in blood pressure
 - You can watch for this by having your blood pressure checked at the pharmacy, clinic visits, or at home if you have a blood pressure monitor.
- Stomach ulcer or a bleed
 - There are several risk factors for developing a NSAID-related stomach ulcer or bleed:
 - previous stomach ulcers/bleeds
 - being above 60 years of age
 - taking high-dose NSAID therapy or more than one NSAID at a time
 - using NSAIDs with other drugs that cause bleeding such as blood thinners
 - If the risk is considered to be of a moderate level, a stomach protection medicine may also be recommended or celecoxib (Celebrex®) may be the preferred NSAID. If too many risk factors for a stomach ulcer/bleed exist, NSAIDs should be avoided.
- Kidney dysfunction
 - This side effect is a bigger concern in the elderly or patients whose kidneys aren't functioning well. Periodic kidney function checks may be performed if you use NSAIDs regularly.

What storage conditions are needed for this medication?

Keep this medication in the container it came in, tightly closed, and out of reach of children. Store at room temperature, away from excess heat/moisture (not in the kitchen or bathroom).