

Sisters of St. Francis Health Services, Inc.

Anti-Inflammatory Medicines

What are anti-inflammatory medicines?

Anti-inflammatory medicines can reduce pain and inflammation. Inflammation is the redness, heat, swelling, and increased blood flow caused by infection, disease, or injury. There are 2 main kinds of anti-inflammatory medicines: nonsteroidal and steroidal.

- Aspirin, ibuprofen, and naproxen are **nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs)**. You don't need a prescription to buy low doses of these medicines. Higher doses are available only with a prescription. A type of NSAIDs called COX-2 inhibitors, such as celecoxib (Celebrex), are NSAIDs that can be bought only with a prescription.
- **Steroid medicines** are similar to hormones. They are available only with a prescription except for the 0.5% hydrocortisone skin cream for mild rashes. Prescription steroids have a stronger effect than NSAIDs. They come in different forms, such as pills, shots, inhalers, creams, ointments, and eyedrops. Examples of steroidal medicines are cortisone and prednisone.

When are they used?

Anti-inflammatory medicines are taken for many kinds of problems, such as:

- injuries
- arthritis
- flu
- headaches
- menstrual cramps
- asthma
- skin problems.

What should I watch out for while taking these medicines?

Some possible side effects of **NSAIDs** are:

- upset stomach
- stomach bleeding or ulcers
- high blood pressure
- dizziness or ringing in the ears
- rash
- kidney problems.

Taking NSAIDs increases your risk of bleeding. You should not take NSAIDs if:

- You have been diagnosed with ulcer disease or a bleeding disorder.
- You are taking a blood thinner.

Also, you may need to stop taking these medicines before surgery or dental work. Be sure to tell your surgeon you are taking NSAIDs or aspirin.

Some people who have asthma can have an asthma attack after taking aspirin. If you have asthma, ask your provider if you should use NSAIDS.

Because of the problems NSAIDS can cause, adults 65 years old or older should not take them for more than 7 days without their provider's approval.

Aspirin or medicines that have aspirin in them should not be given to anyone younger than 18 years of age if they have a viral infection. Taking aspirin is a risk for a serious illness called Reye's syndrome. For this reason some healthcare providers think it is best not to use aspirin at all under age 18

Some COX-2 inhibitors have been linked to a greater risk of heart attacks and stroke. If you are taking this type of NSAID, talk to your healthcare provider about this.

Long-term use of a **steroid** can have serious side effects. They include:

- loss of bone, leading to osteoporosis
- eye problems such as cataracts or glaucoma
- problems fighting infection
- mood changes
- high blood pressure
- high blood sugar and diabetes.

Take these medicines exactly as your healthcare provider prescribes. Do not take more or less of them or take them longer than prescribed. Do not suddenly stop taking a steroid without your provider's approval. Usually you have to reduce your dosage gradually.

Remember your provider needs to know if you take any anti-inflammatory drugs. They can cause serious side effects and may interact with other medicines that you are taking.

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