

Nonsteroidal Anti-inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs)

What are NSAIDs?

NSAIDs are medicines that are used to treat a wide variety of conditions, including pain and swelling. They account for millions of prescriptions and billions of nonprescription capsules and tablets each year in the United States.

There are many types of NSAIDs. The oldest and most familiar is aspirin. Aspirin has always been used to treat pain, inflammation, and fever but is now being used in low doses to help prevent heart attack, stroke, and angina.

Other commonly used NSAIDs include ibuprofen and naproxen. These drugs are available as over-the-counter products or by prescription, depending upon the dosage strength. They are often used to treat headache, muscle ache, arthritis, and fever.

There is another class of NSAIDs called COX-2 inhibitors. The only one currently available is Celebrex® (celecoxib), which is available by prescription. COX-2 inhibitors are effective at reducing pain and swelling.

Common over-the-counter drugs that contain an NSAID

Many over-the-counter products include aspirin, ibuprofen, or naproxen as an active ingredient. Some common brands include the following:

Aspirin	Ibuprofen	Naproxen
Alka-Seltzer® Plus Cold and Sinus Effervescent	Advil® Caplets	Aleve®
Bayer® Aspirin Tablets	Advil® Cold and Sinus Tablets	Naprosyn®
Excedrin® Extra-Strength Tablets	Motrin® Caplets	
	Midol® Cramp and Body Aches	



Safety considerations

NSAIDs may cause stomach irritation and ulcers. The risk may be higher for people who take NSAIDs for a long time, are older, have poor health, or who drink 3 or more alcoholic drinks per day. Also, make sure to talk to your doctor before taking NSAIDs if you have kidney disease.

Tips for use

- Tell your doctor or pharmacist if you are allergic to any NSAID before using it
- Before taking any medicine, always read the label to determine whether an NSAID is one of the active ingredients. If you are unsure, check with your pharmacist
- It is always best to talk to your doctor or pharmacist before taking more than one medicine containing an NSAID
- If you are taking aspirin on a regular basis to help prevent heart attack or stroke, do not take another NSAID to treat pain or fever without talking to your doctor
- If you are having surgery, including dental surgery, tell the doctor or dentist that you are taking an NSAID

Tell your healthcare provider about your medical and family history. Also tell your healthcare provider about all the medicines you take, including prescription and nonprescription medicines.