

NSAIDs

Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), are a family of prescription and over the counter (OTC) drugs that provide three main benefits; analgesia, or pain relief, anti-inflammatory, reduced swelling and antipyretic, fever reduction. The most common are aspirin, Ibuprofen, naproxen, ketoprofen, Motrin, Advil, and prescription brands such as Vioxx and Celebrex. We will include acetaminophen even though it's not an NSAID.

The good/bad news is that they are effective, non-addictive, inexpensive, and readily available. However, frequent use may affect major organ systems.

GI ISSUES. NSAID use can cause stomach/ intestine problems. One study estimated a 200-500 percent increase in peptic ulcer rates. A study published in the Journal of Gastroenterology in 1998 estimated 16,500 NSAID related deaths due to gastric bleeding from prescription NSAIDs and ONLY when prescribed for rheumatoid and osteoarthritis pain. Those 16,500 prescription related deaths represent a small fraction of likely total deaths. In 2001 there were 70 million NSAID prescriptions and 30 BILLION OTC NSAID products sold. That means there are 3000 times more OTC NSAIDs used than prescriptions NSAIDs. Can we extrapolate 16,500 prescription related deaths times 3000 times OTC use? It's too scary to do the math.

KIDNEYS. NBA basketball players Alonzo Mourning and Sean Eliot both had kidney transplants due to NSAID related kidney damage. Some studies suggest 10 – 30% of people on kidney dialysis are there from NSAID use.

THE HEART: NSAIDs may increase the risk of myocardial infarction and stroke by 2 times. If you have had a previous heart attack or stroke, the risk goes to 10Xs. NSAIDs are likely responsible for 20% of hospital admissions for congestive heart failure. Vioxx, a prescription based replacement for Ibuprofen was taken off the market after five years with direct evidence it caused 250,000 cardiovascular events and 60,000 deaths. Celebrex is facing similar scrutiny.

Liver: A major organ, kind of like a sponge that filters bad stuff out of our blood. Acetaminophen use clogs up the pores in the liver. One study showed elevated liver enzymes with just 10 days use. Using acetaminophen with cholesterol lowering medication is even more dangerous.

Recommendations: Restrict NSAID use to no more than 30 days. If using for long periods, ask your MD to order liver, kidney and GI testing to assess for damage. Ask your MD for a narcotic pain medication for short term use, and leave out the acetaminophen. If experiencing chronic pain that does not resolve consider a referral to a board certified pain management specialist who can get you on a non-NSAID based pain medication.

ALTERNATIVES: A high quality Omega 3 (3000 – 4000 mg of combined EPA/DHA daily). For joint pain try glucosamine/chondroitin/MSM. Optimize your vitamin D3 with sunlight and supplements, it can help reduce pain. Try an inflammation reducing diet. The American diet increases inflammation which increases pain, heart disease and cancer. The bottom line is daily chronic use of any medication has significant health effects. Our current system for treating pain is broken and you or someone you know will be affected through the use of NSAIDs and acetaminophen. Consider other options. See a Chiropractor and get back on the road to wellness. Your life depends on it.

Dr. Larry Bridge is a resident of Stanly County and has owned Montgomery County Chiropractic Center since 1997 with offices in Albemarle and Troy. He is board certified in Acupuncture and has more than 8 years experience using Decompression Traction for neck, back pain, disc problems and related arm and leg pain. For more info and past articles visit his website at WWW.DRBRIDGECHIROPRACTIC.COM or call 704-982-2102.