

Your Health Checklist: NSAIDS

If you have a headache or cold, you may take a pain reliever to relieve your symptoms. Pain relievers such as Ibuprofen and aspirin are called Nonsteroidal Anti-inflammatory Drugs or NSAIDS. They are available by prescription and over the counter. Follow this checklist for tips on how to take NSAIDS safely.

DO: Take NSAIDS with a glass of water and food. Sometimes taking these medications can cause stomach upset.

DO: Take these medications only for a short time. The FDA advises over the counter NSAIDS should only be taken for 10 days or so for pain and no more than three days for a fever. If you are still in pain or have a fever, call your healthcare provider.

DO: Take the lowest dose to treat your pain or fever. Taking NSAIDS in high doses can increase your risk of stomach bleeding. If you have a history of heart disease:

DO: Talk to your doctor before you take these medications because they can increase your risk of heart attack or stroke.

DO: Ask your doctor before using NSAIDS if you have heartburn, high blood pressure, or asthma.

DO NOT: Take NSAIDS before or after coronary artery bypass graft surgery. It can increase your risk of heart attack or stroke.

DO NOT: Drink alcohol while taking these medications. Alcohol can raise your risk of getting ulcers and can cause serious stomach problems.

If you are pregnant: **DO NOT:** Take NSAIDS at 20 weeks or later during your pregnancy, because they may cause kidney problems in your baby, which can lead to low levels of amniotic fluid. Talk to your healthcare provider about which medicines are safe to take during your pregnancy.

If you are breastfeeding: **DO NOT:** Take aspirin. Aspirin has a blood-thinning effect and can raise the risk of bleeding for your baby. Aspirin has also been linked to Reye's syndrome, a rare but serious condition that causes brain and liver swelling.

NSAIDS are helpful in relieving pain from headaches, muscle aches, and arthritis. Follow this checklist to take NSAIDS safely.