

# Understanding Non-steroidal Anti-inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs)

When your back hurts, your head aches or you have a fever, you take Ibuprofen or aspirin to feel better. These types of pain medications are called non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs or NSAIDs.

NSAIDs relieve pain and inflammation. They are used to treat any number of ailments including: Osteoarthritis, Rheumatoid Arthritis, headaches, fever, back pain, dental pain, and menstrual cramps.

These medications are available by prescription or over the counter. The most common NSAIDs are Aspirin, Ibuprofen and Naproxen. You may have side effects if you take large doses of NSAIDs or if you take them for a long time. Common side effects include: heartburn, stomach pain, nausea, vomiting, gas, feeling bloated, increased risk of heart attack and stroke. Call your healthcare provider if you experience any of these symptoms.

Some people are at a higher risk for more serious side effects like stomach ulcers and bleeding from taking NSAIDs. If you are 65 years old, have high blood pressure, have heart disease, have kidney disease, have Asthma, a stomach ulcer, take blood thinners, take certain medications for depression, if you smoke, and if you drink alcohol regularly you may be at an increased risk. Talk to your healthcare provider if you have any of these conditions before taking NSAIDs.

NSAIDs are useful for relieving pain and inflammation. But remember to only take them for a short time and in low doses. If you have questions about NSAIDs, talk to your healthcare provider.