



Share the Wellness Tip

February 15, 2013



Pained by Over-the-Counter-Choices?

Oh, the aches and pains! Whether it's your head, back or sore muscles choosing the right pain reliever from all the available choices can be a real pain in the neck. Over-the-counter pain relievers provide similar relief for mild to moderate pain. However, some are somewhat better than others for certain ailments, or less likely to cause side effects.

- Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) include aspirin, ibuprofen (such as the brand Advil®), and naproxen sodium (such as the brand Aleve®).
- Ibuprofen and naproxen sodium are more potent than aspirin for toothaches and minor arthritis.
- Aspirin is not recommended if you have ulcers, asthma, uncontrolled high blood pressure, and liver, kidney, or bleeding disorders.
- Ibuprofen and naproxen sodium can be gentler on the stomach than aspirin. But even these NSAIDs may cause ulcers or stomach bleeding in some people.
- Aspirin may prevent or treat heart disease and stroke but talk to a doctor first.
- For babies 6 months of age or younger, parents should only give acetaminophen for pain relief. For a child 6 months of age or older, either acetaminophen or ibuprofen can be given for pain relief. Be sure to ask your child's healthcare provider for the right dosage for your child's age and size. Do not give aspirin to your child because of Reye's syndrome, a rare but very serious illness that harms the liver and brain.
- Very young children, the elderly, and people taking more than one type of medicine are at greater risk of adverse effects from over the counter medicines.
- The risk for side effects increases when taking these medications more often. Remember, too, your chance of overdosing goes up if you're taking more than one drug with the same active ingredient. For example, cough and cold medications may contain multiple ingredients including acetaminophen or NSAIDs. Take the time to carefully read the label of any over the counter medicine and you may need to adjust the dosage if you are taking multiple medicines.
- Most healthy adults can occasionally use nonprescription pain relievers without worry. Talk to your doctor if you take pain relievers more than 10 days in a row, use them often, or if they aren't effective against your pain.

Sources: Familydoctor.org, [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](http://CentersforDiseaseControlandPrevention.gov).

