

Nonsteroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs

Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) are the most frequently prescribed medications worldwide (this doesn't include the over the counter market). Commonly used NSAIDs include the over the counter options, ibuprofen (Advil), and ketoprofen (Orudis), and their prescription-only cousins, Voltaren, Indocin, Naprosyn and Feldene.

NSAIDs are one of the most common drug groups associated with serious adverse side effects, most of which are well established and predictable. However, their potential and harmfulness are underplayed. Because of this, many of our friends and family take these drugs repeatedly, at even the slightest hint of discomfort.

The most widely known negative effect is gastrointestinal irritation. The risk of a bleeding ulcer ranges from 1 per 1000 to more than 10% of patients. Keep in mind that these studies don't count the intestinal damage leading up to bleeding, as well as the many patients who discontinue NSAID use when experiencing intestinal upset. Researchers estimate that 8-10% of kidney disease was attributable to acetaminophen (found in Tylenol). Other side effects include liver damage, central nervous system and brain illness, ringing in the ears and headache. From 1983 to 1989 there were 581 deaths attributed to the use of pain killers and the incidences are increasing by 10% to 100% each year.

Researchers are now discovering that ibuprofen can slow the healing process, especially when the body is low on fluids, such as after a workout. To stay on the safe side, I recommend applying ice to the painful area every 15 to 20 minutes for a few hours to reduce pain and swelling. Keep in mind that the recommended dose is 2400 to 3200mg per day. Lower doses act only as pain killers and have no effect on the inflammation. Pain pills treat the pain, not the cause of the injury. If the pain or discomfort keeps coming back or lasts more than 24 hours, find treatment for the cause of the problem.

Yours in health,

Dr. Rick

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