

# NSAIDs

## ***Pain Treatment***

Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) are often recommended for initial treatment of pain and can be added to more powerful drugs to treat worse pain.

Acetaminophen, such as Tylenol, which is not an NSAID, is safer for pain and should be tried first. For many people, it can ease mild to moderate pain.

## ***Side Effects***

NSAIDs are important but they can have side effects.

### **Bleeding Ulcers**

Dyspepsia is a medical term for heartburn and stomach trouble. It is the most common side effect of NSAID treatment, affecting about half of the people taking NSAIDs in full doses.

In each year of NSAID treatment, about 1 person in fifty will have significant bleeding from the stomach or intestines. Serious ulcers can develop in people who did not have any warning symptoms at all, such as heartburn. You are at higher risk if you have a history of ulcers or if you take high doses of NSAIDs.

You are also at higher risk if you use other drugs that may cause bleeding. These drugs include:

- Warfarin (Coumadin)
- Steroids
- Osteoporosis treatments
- Other NSAIDs
- Some depression medicines

***Side Effects,  
continued***

If you are at high risk for bleeding, there are other medicines that you can take with NSAIDs to reduce this risk.

**Other Side Effects**

Other side effects of NSAIDs include:

- An increase in high blood pressure
- Worsening of heart failure
- Interference with the beneficial effects of low-dose aspirin used to prevent heart disease and stroke
- Swelling
- Rare liver and kidney problems, which can be discovered early through blood tests

Talk with your doctor about using NSAIDs if you have any of these side effects.

***Types of NSAIDs***

There are several types of NSAIDs available. The table at the end of the handout lists generic and brand names. The usual recommended doses of any of the various NSAIDs are equally effective. However, for most people, NSAIDs can be toxic after a prolonged period of use.

**Salicylates**

Salicylates include the common pain relievers, such as aspirin.

**Non-Acetylated Salicylates**

Non-acetylated salicylates are less expensive than many other NSAIDs and are probably safer than other NSAIDs.

***Types of NSAIDs,  
continued***

**COX-2 Inhibitors**

COX-2 inhibitors are the newest NSAIDs. They are also more expensive. These drugs control both pain and arthritis, but not better than the less expensive NSAIDs.

They do have less risk of ulcers and stomach upset, though. They also have fewer effects on stomach, kidney, and blood. However these benefits may disappear if you take small doses of aspirin for heart disease or stroke prevention.

The three approved drugs in this class are celecoxib (Celebrex), rofecoxib (Vioxx), and valdecoxib (Bextra).

**Other NSAIDs**

Of the other NSAIDs, Ibuprofen is particularly safe at lower doses.

***NSAIDs and Costs***

The costs for NSAIDS range from less than \$10 per month to \$180 per month. The more expensive prescription medications are not known to be more effective in general, but could be better for you.

*continued*

**NSAIDs and  
Costs,  
continued**

Below is a list of NSAIDs, with their generic name, brand name, and relative cost.

Generic Name	Brand Name	Cost
<b>Salicylates</b>		
Buffered aspirin	Many	\$
Extended release aspirin	Many	\$\$\$
Enteric coated aspirin	Many	\$
<b>Non-Acetylated Salicylates</b>		
Choline magnesium trisalicylate	Trilisate	\$\$\$
Sodium salicylate	Dolobid	\$\$
Salicylsalicylic acid	Disalcid	\$\$
<b>COX-2 Inhibitors</b>		
Celecoxib	Celebrex	\$\$\$\$
Rofecoxib	Vioxx	\$\$\$\$
Valdecoxib	Bextra	\$\$\$\$
<b>Other NSAIDs</b>		
Ibuprofen	Motrin, Rufen	\$
Naproxen	Naprosyn, Anaprox	\$\$
Fenoprofen	Nalfon	\$\$
Ketoprofen	Orudis, Oruvail	\$\$\$
Flurbiprofen	Ansaid	\$\$
Oxaprozin	Daypro	\$\$
Indomethacin	Indocin	\$\$
Tolmetin	Tolectin	\$\$
Sulindac	Clinoril	\$\$
Diclofenac	Voltaren, Cataflam	\$\$
Etodolac	Lodine	\$\$
Meclofenamate	Meclomen	\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$
Piroxicam	Feldene	\$\$
Nabumetone	Relafen	\$\$\$\$
Average retail cost per month, each \$ representing around \$20 at the usual doses.		

***Choosing the  
Right NSAIDs***

If the benefits and side effects of one NSAID are not what you would like, try a drug from a different class. There are dozens of NSAIDs to choose from.

However, you may find that one specific medicine is more effective or has fewer side effects for you. Your doctor can help you make these choices.