

Endorsed by



Information for adult patients prescribed Non-Steroidal Anti Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs) for the Treatment of Pain

IMPORTANT: The information given in this leaflet is for adults and not for when Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs) are used for children.

This leaflet gives information for patients taking Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs). If you have any concerns or questions that are not answered by this leaflet please talk to the person who prescribed you the NSAIDs or your pharmacist.

What are anti-inflammatory medicines?

- ▶ These can be called Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs). They include Ibuprofen, Naproxen, Diclofenac, Celecoxib, Etoricoxib, Meloxicam, Indomethacin, Piroxicam, Etodolac and others
- ▶ The Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs) prescribed for you will have a leaflet with more information about the medicine and its side effects.
- ▶ You can talk to your pharmacist or the health care professional who prescribed this for you if you have any questions.

Why have I been prescribed a Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drug (NSAID)?

- ▶ Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs) are used to treat short term pain from an injury or surgery.

NSAIDs for the Treatment of Pain

- ▶ Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs) can also be used to help with long term pain. For example, pain from conditions such as osteoarthritis, low back pain or rheumatoid arthritis.
- ▶ Taking Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs) may mean you need less of a stronger pain medicine. This means you will have fewer side effects.

How do NSAIDs work?

- ▶ When you feel pain and stiffness, your body is making chemicals (prostaglandins) which 'tell' you it hurts.
- ▶ Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs) reduce the amount of these chemicals. This will reduce your pain but is not a cure.

When should I take it?

- ▶ Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs) can be taken regularly or just when needed if your pain is not always as bad.
- ▶ Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs) should be taken with food if possible, or within 30 mins after food.

How long will it take to work?

- ▶ It may take up to an hour for a tablet or suppository to start working. A suppository is a small, round or cone-shaped object that you put in your body, into your bottom. Once it's inside, it melts or dissolves and releases the medicine. It may take longer for you to feel the full effect.
- ▶ Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs) as a gel or cream can take up to 2 days for full effect.
- ▶ Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs) do not work for everyone. If your pain does not get better, you should talk to your healthcare professional

What are the possible side effects?

A side effect is an unwanted effect of a medicine.

Side effects are usually related to how much of the Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs) you are taking. Some people will have more side effects than others. Side effects are less likely if you can take the smallest amount that reduces your pain.

NSAIDs for the Treatment of Pain

Different Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs) can have different side effects. If you have questions about your particular medicine, you can read the information leaflet which comes with your medicine, go to [medicines.org.uk](https://www.medicines.org.uk), or speak to a healthcare professional.



Most side effects from Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs) are mild. If any of your side effects happen often, make you feel unwell or worry you, you should stop taking the medicine and talk to your healthcare professional or pharmacist.

Common side effects include:

- ▶ Heartburn
- ▶ Indigestion or pains in your stomach
- ▶ Feeling sick (nausea) or being sick (vomiting)
- ▶ Headache

Other, less common side effects include:

- ▶ Dizziness
- ▶ Swollen feet or legs
- ▶ Putting on weight
- ▶ A rash or itching
- ▶ Unexplained wheezing
- ▶ Shortness of breath

Important

If you have any of the following side effects, stop taking the medicine straight away and get medical advice:

- ▶ Sickness and any blood or dark particles that look like coffee grounds, or blood in your poo (stools).
- ▶ Chest pain
- ▶ Shortness of breath
- ▶ Sudden weakness
- ▶ Difficulty speaking

NSAIDs for the Treatment of Pain

- ▶ Even short-term use of Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs) may be linked to a very small increased risk of having a stroke or heart attack. However, your overall risk of having a stroke or a heart attack while taking Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs) is very low.
- ▶ Before taking a Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs), your healthcare professional should talk to you about the risk of heart attack or stroke.
- ▶ Using Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs), even for a short amount of time, can harm the kidneys, especially in people with underlying kidney disease. If you are worried about this please talk to your healthcare professional.

Can I take this medicine long-term?

- ▶ Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs) can be taken for long term conditions. However, you should first discuss it with your healthcare professional to make sure it is safe.
- ▶ The risks and benefits of long term Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs) use should be discussed regularly with your healthcare professional.

Can I drink alcohol?

- ▶ Once you are taking the right amount of Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drug (NSAID) for you, you can have alcohol in moderation.

Can I drive?

- ▶ Yes, it is usually safe to drive whilst taking a Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drug (NSAID).
- ▶ Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs) can sometimes make you dizzy or drowsy. If you feel this, then do not drive or operate machinery.

What should I tell my prescribing healthcare professional?

- ▶ If you are allergic to any medicines.
- ▶ If you are taking any other medicines or herbal medicines.
- ▶ If you are pregnant or breastfeeding, or if you are planning to become pregnant in the future.
- ▶ If you have:
 - ▶ Active stomach ulcers or duodenal ulcer or have had such ulcers in the past
 - ▶ Kidney problems
 - ▶ Asthma or any other breathing disorder
 - ▶ Any problem with bleeding or history of blood clots, or currently using a blood thinner

NSAIDs for the Treatment of Pain

- ▶ Liver problems
- ▶ Crohn's Disease or Ulcerative Colitis
- ▶ High-blood pressure
- ▶ Had a heart attack, suffer with angina or have recurrent chest pains
- ▶ Shortness of breath, fatigue, swelling in legs, ankles or feet, or other symptoms of heart failure
- ▶ Had a stroke
- ▶ Dementia or Parkinson's disease

What if I forget to take a dose?

- ▶ Take it as soon as you remember unless it is almost time for your next dose. If it is close to your next dose, take this as normal and do not take the missed dose.
- ▶ Do not take two doses together.
- ▶ Make sure that you do not take more than the maximum prescribed daily dose.

What if I want to stop taking Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs)?

- ▶ Over time your level of pain may change. It is important to check often if you still need to use your Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs) medicine.
- ▶ If your pain improves, you should think about stopping your medicine or reducing the dose. This will help reduce unwanted side effects.
- ▶ Although you can safely stop taking your Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs) whenever you want to, it is best to talk to a healthcare professional if you have been taking them for a long time.

This information is not intended to replace your doctor's advice. You should read the manufacturer's information for patients, which will be given to you by your pharmacist with your medicine. Keep all medicines away from children, vulnerable adults or pets.

This leaflet has been developed in conjunction with the British Pain Society, Pain UK and the Royal College of Nursing, and has been endorsed by the Royal Pharmaceutical Society.

You can feedback any comments on this leaflet to contact@fpm.ac.uk

Review date: May 2026