

Though nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) are some of the most commonly used pain relievers, results from a national peer-reviewed survey reveal that NSAIDs are often taken inappropriately—and patients are generally unaware of the potential for certain serious adverse events associated with NSAIDs.

- 54% of respondents were unaware of the potential adverse events associated with NSAID use<sup>1</sup>
- 38% of respondents reported taking over-the-counter (OTC) NSAIDs while also taking prescription NSAIDs<sup>1</sup>
- 26% of OTC NSAID users reported consuming more than the dosage recommended on the package instructions<sup>1</sup>
- 29% of OTC NSAID users considered themselves at no risk for side effects<sup>1</sup>

Additionally, the survey found that many Americans are unaware that some common drugs are NSAIDs, including aspirin, ibuprofen, naproxen, Advil®, Motrin®, Aleve®, and Bufferin®.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, they may not realize they are consuming more than the recommended dosage when taking a prescription NSAID and one or more of these OTC NSAIDs.

*There is a growing need to educate patients about NSAIDs, their proper use, and their potential risks—and to speak with them about this issue during every visit.*

### Doctor/Patient discussion guide

Here are 5 important points to explain to your patients who are using prescription NSAIDs and/or OTC NSAIDs to manage their pain:

- 1 NSAID use may be associated with an increased risk of serious cardiovascular, gastrointestinal, and renal adverse events.**
- 2 The higher the NSAID dose, the higher the risk.<sup>2-9</sup>**

Because of the dose-related risk of serious GI, CV and renal adverse events, the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recommends using the lowest effective dosage for the shortest duration consistent with individual patient treatment goals.<sup>10</sup>
- 3 NSAIDs can provide safe and effective pain relief when used correctly. If pain persists, additional doses may not improve analgesia, but may increase risk. NOTE: Be sure to tell patients what they should do if they need additional pain relief.**

*Possible discussion:*

“NSAIDs are safe and effective when used as directed, but they can cause problems when used incorrectly. This includes:

- Taking too high a dose (more pills or more often than directed)
- Taking pills for too long
- Taking more than one kind of NSAID at the same time (prescription with OTC, or OTC with OTC)

There is also a limit to how much pain relief NSAIDs can deliver. Taking more of an NSAID might not help manage your pain any better, but it may increase your risk for certain serious and potentially life-threatening adverse events. The goal is to use the lowest effective dose for the shortest length of time.”

- 4 NSAIDs are available by prescription and OTC, but both carry dose-related risks for certain serious side effects and should not be combined. Ask your patients about any OTC medicines they are currently taking.**

*Possible discussion:*

“You may not be familiar with the term ‘NSAID,’ but you probably have heard of some that are available without a prescription at your drugstore or grocery store. In those settings, they are called by their generic and brand names:

- Ibuprofen is sold under the brand names Motrin® and Advil®; naproxen sodium (sometimes just called ‘naproxen’) is sold under the brand name Aleve®
- Some OTC products are a combination of medicines that may contain NSAIDs, such as Excedrin®; Sudafed PE® 12-Hour Pressure+Pain; Alka-Seltzer® Original, Extra Strength, and Lemon Lime; and some cold and cough medicines like NyQuil®

Always check the box or bottle to see if a medicine contains an NSAID.”

- 5 Side effects from NSAIDs may be associated with noticeable symptoms, such as upset stomach, while others may be asymptomatic. Remind your patients to discuss any possible side effects with a health care professional as soon as possible.**

*Possible discussion:*

“These side effects may be as simple as an upset stomach, stomachache, or indigestion, but could signal something worse, so it’s important to inform your doctor right away.”

*For more information and education on NSAID-related issues, visit [NSAIDilemma.com](http://NSAIDilemma.com).*

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