

## **Non-Steroidal Anti-inflammatory (NSAIDs)**

### **Why have I been prescribed NSAIDs?**

NSAIDs are important drugs in the management and treatment of rheumatological conditions, for short term pain and swelling in some situations (Gout) to long term treatment in others (Axial Spondylarthritis). They are one of the many medications your doctor might use to improve your day-to-day quality of life in combination with your disease modifying drugs.

### **What are NSAIDs?**

NSAIDs treat Pain, fever and inflammation

NSAIDs are classified as

- Nonselective NSAIDs (ibuprofen “Brufen”, naproxen, indomethacin, meloxicam, piroxicam, diclofenac “Voltaren” and naproxen)
- or Selective (COX)-2 NSAIDs (coxibs) (celecoxib and etoricoxib).

### **Should I be using NSAID’s?**

NSAID’s should be taken in combination or as an add on with other prescribed medications, in particular with paracetamol unless contraindicated.

### **When should I take my NSAIDs?**

NSAIDs are well absorbed from the stomach and can be taken with food.

### **How Long should I take my NSAID’s?**

In patients with low risk for complications **short term** NSAID’s can be provided. In other words, they are safe to use for a week or two until the pain and inflammation has settled. Remember that these medications do not change your arthritis (as a drug like Methotrexate does), rather they just reduce the pain. Long term NSAID’s should be taken in consultation with a doctor, provided no medical reason they should be avoided. This will be done with monitoring for side effects. Be careful of NSAID’s hidden in combination tablets for example “Arthritis packs” or “Gout packs”.

### **Are other formulations available and safe?**

Most NSAIDs are in an oral form, however some are available in a topical (cream) form as a solution, gel or patch and these are effective in providing direct pain relief while reduce systemic side effects. Voltaren gel (or the generic Panamor gel) is very good.

### **Common side effects of NSAIDs:**

Stomach

Heart Burn (*Dyspepsia*) , Stomach Ulcers , Intestine Ulcers (*Small bowel erosions and strictures*)

Heart and blood vessels

*Heart Failure ' Heart Attacks (Myocardial Infarction) , Stroke*

Kidney

*Body Swelling (Edema and Sodium retention), High Blood pressure (Hypertension),  
Kidney Failure (Acute renal Failure) , Accelerated Chronic kidney failure*

Liver problems

Skin rashes

### **Who should avoid taking NSAID's?**

1. Anyone over the age of 65 yrs, especially if underlying liver or renal disease or poorly controlled blood pressure (Hypertension)
2. History of stomach ulcers
3. History of Heart Failure

### **Who is at risk for Stomach Ulcers**

Patient who might be at risk for ulcers include

1. History of uncomplicated ulcer
2. Age > 65 years
3. High dose NSAID therapy
4. Concurrent use of aspirin, glucocorticoids and anticoagulants

### **Can I take Aspirin and NSAID's?**

Patients who are taking aspirin for secondary prevention of disease (heart attacks, stroke) should discuss with their doctors the risk of taking NSAID's. If needed, take aspirin > 2 hours before NSAID usage.