

Medicines to Treat Inflammation (Anti-Inflammatory Medicines)

What are anti-inflammatory medicines used for?

Anti-inflammatory medicines are used to relieve the redness, heat, and swelling caused by infection, disease, or injury. Many of these medicines are also used to treat fever and pain.

There are 2 main kinds of anti-inflammatory medicines.

- One type is nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), such as aspirin, ibuprofen and naproxen, which are available without a prescription in low doses. They are included in many nonprescription medicines for pain, fever, cold and flu, sinus, and allergy symptoms. Some NSAIDs are available only with a prescription.
- Another type is steroid medicine, which is similar to hormones that your body makes. Cortisone and prednisone are examples of prescription steroids. They come in different forms, such as pills, shots, inhalers, creams, ointments, and eyedrops. They have a stronger anti-inflammatory effect than NSAIDs. You need a prescription for all steroids except 1% hydrocortisone cream, which is used for minor skin irritations.

Anti-inflammatory medicines treat many kinds of problems, such as:

- Injuries
- Arthritis
- Flu
- Headache
- Menstrual cramps
- Skin problems

Steroids are also an important medicine for controlling asthma.

How do they work?

You have chemicals in your body that help you heal by causing inflammation. These chemicals cause redness, heat, and swelling. Too much inflammation can cause pain and may damage your body. NSAIDs and steroids block some of these chemicals and lower the amount of inflammation and pain.

What else do I need to know about this medicine?

- Follow the directions that come with your medicine, including information about food or alcohol. Make sure you know how and when to take your medicine. Do not take more or less than you are supposed to take.
- NSAIDs may cause stomach bleeding and other problems. These risks increase with age. Read the label and take as directed. Unless recommended by your healthcare provider, you should not take this medicine for more than 10 days.

- Many medicines have side effects. A side effect is a symptom or problem that is caused by the medicine. Side effects are more likely if you take too much of this medicine. Be aware that NSAIDs are in many different products. You may be taking too much without knowing it. Check labels or ask your pharmacist if a medicine contains an NSAID. Ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist what side effects the medicine may cause and what you should do if you have side effects.
- Check with your healthcare provider before you give any medicine that contains aspirin or salicylates to a child or teen. This includes medicines like baby aspirin, some cold medicines, and Pepto-Bismol. Children and teens who take aspirin are at risk for a serious illness called Reye's syndrome.
- Try to get all of your prescriptions filled at the same place. Your pharmacist can help make sure that all of your medicines are safe to take together.
- Keep a list of your medicines with you. List all of the prescription medicines, nonprescription medicines, supplements, natural remedies, and vitamins that you take. Tell all healthcare providers who treat you about all of the products you are taking.

If you have any questions, ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist for more information. Be sure to keep all appointments for provider visits or tests.

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