

## Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs)

NSAIDs are medications that can reduce swelling around joints and nerve endings to give pain relief. They are particularly useful in treating inflammatory type pain. Two commonly prescribed NSAIDs are ibuprofen and naproxen.

This leaflet gives information on NSAID medication taken by mouth (orally).

### What dose should I take?

Different NSAIDs and doses work for different people. You may have to try one or more until you find one which works for you. The dose of NSAID may be increased slowly every few weeks. This will depend on your response and any side effects you experience. It may take a few weeks of regular use for the maximum anti-inflammatory effect to be felt. When your pain is under control you may be advised to reduce or stop your anti-inflammatory medication.

### Are there any side effects?

All medications can cause side effects but not everyone will get them. A full list is in the patient information sheet with your prescription.

The most common side effects with NSAIDs are irritation of the stomach causing indigestion like symptoms or a feeling of sickness. This can be made less by remembering to take your NSAID **with or after food**. You may also be prescribed a medication (Omeprazole, or Lansoprazole) to help lessen the risk of stomach problems. You should take this medication every day whilst you are taking a NSAID.

If you have asthma, a heart condition, high blood pressure, kidney problems or have had previous stomach ulcers or bleeding you should let your doctor, pharmacist or pain specialist know before taking an NSAID.

NSAIDs can cause kidney problems especially if they are used for a long time at high doses. A blood test may be required to check this.

If you have asthma, you may find it gets worse. If so, stop taking your NSAID immediately and contact your doctor, pharmacist or pain specialist for advice.

NSAID's can increase the risk of heart problems and increase blood pressure. Some NSAID's are not recommended to be taken in people who already have heart conditions.

If side effects go on and become a problem or you have others not expected then speak to your doctor, pharmacist or pain specialist.

### How long should I take NSAIDs for?

This varies for different people. In general, they will have to be taken for as long as you require relief for inflammatory type pain. This should be regularly reviewed to ensure benefit to pain control is more than any side effects or risks. The overall aim is to use the lowest effective dose for the shortest period of time. Side effects are more likely when the medication is used for a long period of time or in large doses.

Many chronic pain conditions (e.g. Osteoarthritis) only have inflammatory pain part of time. Other medications which are paracetamol- based may give better pain relief. You can then add an NSAID during inflammatory "flare-up" when you are experiencing symptoms of swelling and heat. Some rheumatology conditions, such as Ankylosing Spondylitis, may require longer-term use of anti-inflammatory medications.

### Other information

If you are breastfeeding, pregnant or likely to become pregnant, you should let your doctor/ nurse/ pharmacist know. NSAIDs may be linked with reduced fertility which resolves on stopping.

NSAIDs can interact with many other medications. These include warfarin, lithium and many drugs used in the treatment of high blood pressure. You should never buy other medications over the counter without telling the pharmacist that you are taking a NSAID.

## Medication in chronic pain

The benefit from taking medication should always be more than any side-effects you may have. Only **you**

- know how bad your pain is
- are able to say if your medication is helping
- know what side effects you are having

It may take a few weeks or several trials of different medications to find the best combination for you and your pain. It may help to keep a diary of your pain and other symptoms. Side effects often become less once you have been on a medicine for a few days.

Please read the patient information sheet given with each medication. It will give you more information about the medicine and any side effects.

You can discuss your pain medication with your doctor, pharmacist or pain specialist. They can give you advice on which pain medicines may help and they can help you find the best way to take your medicines. They can advise you on putting your dose up safely if your pain is worse and on taking less medication safely when your pain is less.

If your medicine is not helping you may not need to take it. Please talk to your doctor or pharmacist first. Some pain medicines should not be stopped suddenly.

Do not share or take other peoples medication. Always advise your doctor, pharmacist or pain specialist about any other medication or products you are taking for chronic pain including things bought from the pharmacy, herbal supplements or non- prescribed medicines.

**Understanding how your medications work may help you to get the best pain relief from it with the least side-effects.**

# Oral Non-Steroidal Anti-inflammatory Drugs (NSAID's)

## Patient Information Leaflet



GETTING YOU ON TRACK TO RECOVERY

NHS Fife provides accessible communication in a variety of formats including for people who are speakers of community languages, who require Easy Read versions, who speak BSL, read Braille or use Audio formats.

NHS Fife SMS text service number 07805800005 is available for people who have a hearing or speech impairment.

To find out more about accessible formats contact:  
[fife-UHB.EqualityandHumanRights@nhs.net](mailto:fife-UHB.EqualityandHumanRights@nhs.net) or phone 01592 729130