

Non Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drug (NSAID) Gel

This group of medications are useful for treating inflammatory type pain. Ibuprofen and diclofenac are NSAIDs.

NSAIDs can be used in a gel base to apply directly to the painful area. When they are applied to the skin they are called 'topical non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs' (NSAID), or just 'topical anti-inflammatories'. They can be useful as an alternative to oral (tablets or capsules) NSAIDs.

They can reduce swelling, heat, pain, redness and stiffness in your joints and muscles when rubbed into the skin over the affected area. They can also be used to help ease pain caused by osteoarthritis in the knee or hand. The massaging action on your skin when you apply the gel can also send helpful messages to the brain.

Using a topical preparation means that the total amount of anti-inflammatory in your body is very low. This in turn means that you are much less likely to have side-effects due to this medication.

How to use NSAID gel

Different gels and strengths are available. Your pain specialist will advise which one is best for you. Ibuprofen gel is available in 5% and 10% strengths and diclofenac gel (Voltarol emulgel®) as 1.16%.

Apply a thin layer of the gel to the painful area three or four times a day with gentle massage. Wash your hands carefully each time after you apply the gel to your skin, unless your hands are the area being treated.

Important information;

- Do not use the gel if you are taking oral NSAID medicines
- Avoid contact with eyes, mucous membranes and very inflamed or broken skin
- Avoid exposing the area where you are using your gel to excessive sunlight

- Do not use plasters or bandages (dressings) on top of these medications
- Discontinue use after 4 weeks if no benefit

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.

NSAID gels are sometimes prescribed instead of oral anti-inflammatory medications because they have fewer side-effects. Side effects are usually much less likely to happen when you apply the medication to your skin than when you take the medication as a tablet.

Common side effects are redness, rash or itching of the skin where your NSAID gel is rubbed in, but usually this lessens or disappears after a few days. These gels may make your skin more sensitive to direct sunlight.

Uncommon side effects are feeling sick, indigestion and stomach discomfort and asthma.

Occasionally people have an allergic reaction to these gels, which could cause a rash, swallowing or breathing problems, or swelling of your lips, face, throat or tongue. If you have any of these side effects whilst using your gel, stop using it at once and contact your doctor, pharmacist or pain specialist.

How long should I use my NSAID gel for?

You can use it for as long as you require relief for inflammatory type pain. Many chronic pain conditions (e.g. Osteo-arthritis) only have inflammatory pain part of the time. Other medications, in particular paracetamol based medication, may give better pain relief. You can then add in your NSAID gel during "flare-up". This is when you have symptoms of increased pain swelling, heat, redness or stiffness.

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.



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Patient Information Leaflet



GETTING YOU ON TRACK TO RECOVERY

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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:
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