**NSAIDs Warnings and Precautions**

Diabetes and asthma are among the conditions you should let your healthcare provider know about before taking NSAIDs. Also, NSAIDs should be used with caution in people with high blood pressure or congestive heart failure. A few other precautions and warnings with NSAIDs include the safety of taking them while pregnant or nursing, the risk of a heart attack or stroke, and people who should not take NSAIDs.

**NSAIDs: What Should I Tell My Healthcare Provider?**

Prior to taking NSAIDs, you should tell your healthcare provider if you have:

- **Asthma**
- **Heart disease**, including **congestive heart failure**
- **High blood pressure (hypertension)**
- Liver disease or failure
- Kidney disease or failure
- Bleeding problems (or if you are taking medicine that decreases your blood’s ability to clot)
- **Diabetes**
- Nasal polyps
- Systemic lupus erythematosus (lupus or SLE)
- Stomach ulcers (or a history of them) or stomach bleeding
- Any **allergies** to medicines, including aspirin or other NSAID pain medicines.

Also, let your healthcare provider know if you:

- Are pregnant or thinking about becoming pregnant
- Are breastfeeding
- Drink alcohol frequently
- Smoke
- Are having or have recently had heart surgery.

In addition, tell your healthcare provider about all of the medicines you take, including prescription and non-prescription medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements.
Some precautions and warnings to be aware of prior to taking **NSAIDs** include the following:

- All NSAIDs have been reported to cause cardiovascular events such as a **heart attack** or **stroke**, both of which can result in loss of life. People with **cardiovascular disease** or who have **risk factors for cardiovascular disease** appear to be at greater risk.

To decrease the chances of these problems, people should take the smallest effective dose for the shortest period of time. Also, call 911 if you notice things such as:

  - Chest pain
  - Shortness of breath
  - Weakness
  - Slurring of speech.

- All NSAIDs may cause **high blood pressure** or cause high **blood pressure** to become worse. These medications should be used with caution in people who have high blood pressure.

- All NSAIDs may cause **congestive heart failure** or swelling. Make sure to contact your healthcare provider if you notice any unexplained weight gain or swelling during treatment with NSAIDs. Also, these medications should be used with caution in people who have **heart failure**.

- All NSAIDs have been reported to cause problems in the stomach and intestines, including bleeding (known as gastrointestinal bleeding), stomach ulcers, or holes in the stomach or intestines. These problems can lead to serious complications or even loss of life. Extreme caution should be used if NSAIDs are prescribed to people with a history of ulcers or gastrointestinal bleeding.

To decrease the chances of these problems occurring, people should take the smallest effective dose for the shortest period of time. Make sure to contact your healthcare provider immediately if you experience any signs or symptoms of stomach ulcers or bleeding, including:

  - Abdominal pain (stomach pain)
  - Indigestion
  - Black, tarry stools
  - Vomiting blood.
• People taking NSAIDs can suffer kidney damage. It is more common in the elderly and people with kidney disease, heart failure, or liver problems. It is also more common in those taking diuretics or ACE inhibitors.

• Liver damage can occur in people taking NSAIDs. Contact your healthcare provider immediately if you notice things such as:
  - Nausea
  - Tiredness
  - Lethargy
  - Itchy or yellowing skin
  - Abdominal pain (stomach pain)
  - Flu-like symptoms.

• NSAIDs have been reported to cause allergic reactions. Seek immediate emergency medical attention if you notice things such as hives, an unexplained rash, difficulty breathing, or swelling of the face and throat while taking NSAIDs.

• In rare cases, people taking NSAIDs can develop a serious rash. If you notice an unexplained rash or blisters, fever, or itchy skin, stop taking the NSAID and call your healthcare provider.

• If you are an alcoholic or drink alcohol frequently, discuss this with your healthcare provider prior to starting NSAIDs. Alcohol can affect the way the liver works, indirectly affecting NSAIDs.

• NSAIDS have been known to cause an increase in liver enzymes. Therefore, it is recommended that you have a blood test to measure your liver function before starting NSAIDs and 12 weeks after treatment has started.

• NSAIDs have been known to cause anemia. If you are taking these medications for an extended amount of time and show signs of anemia, talk with your healthcare provider.
• You should not take more than one NSAID at one time, as this may increase your risk of any of the problems discussed previously. Many NSAIDs are available with or without a prescription. A brief list of NSAIDs include:

  o **Ibuprofen** (Advil®, Motrin®)
  o **Naproxen** (Naprosyn®)
  o **Naproxen sodium** (Aleve®, Anaprox®, Naprelan®)
  o **Diclofenac** (Cataflam®, Voltaren®)
  o **Indomethacin** (Indocin®)
  o **Nabumetone** (Relafen®)
  o **Oxaprozin** (Daypro®)
  o **Celecoxib** (Celebrex®)
  o **Meloxicam** (Mobic®)
  o **Etodolac** (Lodine®)
  o **Ketoprofen, ketorolac** (Toradol®).

You can ask your doctor or pharmacist for a complete list of these medications.

• NSAIDs are pregnancy Category C medications, meaning that they could potentially cause harm to your unborn child. If you are pregnant, you should take NSAIDs only if your healthcare provider believes that the benefits to you outweigh the possible risks to your unborn child. NSAIDs are not recommended for women in the third trimester of pregnancy, as they can cause injury and even death to the developing fetus. If you become pregnant while taking NSAIDs, contact your healthcare provider immediately (see NSAIDs and Pregnancy for more information).

• If you are breastfeeding, you should not take NSAIDs. Talk with your healthcare provider about whether to stop breastfeeding or stop taking NSAIDs.

**Who Should Not Take NSAIDs?**

You should not take NSAIDs if you:

• Are allergic to any brand of NSAIDs.

• Have an active bleeding condition, such as a stomach ulcer or bleeding within the head.
- Have an allergic reaction, hives, or **asthma** that is caused by aspirin or other nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs.

- Are having or have recently had coronary artery bypass graft surgery (often known as **open heart surgery**, **bypass surgery**, or CABG).

- Are in the **third trimester** of pregnancy or are breastfeeding.

**Final Thoughts on Precautions and Warnings With NSAIDs**  
There are several situations in which NSAIDs should not be taken, as well as a number of precautions and warnings people should be aware of with NSAIDs. However, it is possible that not all of the warnings or precautions were discussed in this article. Therefore, you should talk with your healthcare provider about the specific safety concerns that may apply to you.