

Education

Anti-Inflammatory Medicines

What are anti-inflammatory medicines?

Anti-inflammatory medicines are drugs used to reduce pain and inflammation. Inflammation is the redness, heat, swelling, and increased blood flow caused by infection, disease, or injury. There are 2 main kinds of anti-inflammatory medicines: nonsteroidal and steroidal.

Aspirin, ibuprofen, and naproxen are nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) that you may buy with or without a prescription. A type of NSAIDs called COX-2 inhibitors, such as celecoxib (Celebrex), are prescription NSAIDs.

Steroid medicines are similar to hormones. They have a stronger effect than NSAIDs. They come in different forms, such as pills, shots, inhalers, creams, ointments, or eyedrops. Examples of steroidal medicines are cortisone and prednisone.

When are they used?

Anti-inflammatory medicines are taken for many kinds of problems that cause inflammation and pain, such as:

- injuries
- arthritis
- flu
- headaches
- menstrual cramps
- asthma
- skin problems.

What should I watch out for while taking these medicines?

Possible side effects of NSAIDs are:

- upset stomach
- stomach bleeding or ulcers
- high blood pressure
- dizziness or ringing in the ears
- rash
- kidney problems.

Some COX-2 inhibitors have been linked to a greater risk of heart attacks and stroke. If you are taking this type of NSAID, talk to your health care provider about this.

Long-term use of a steroidal medicine can have more serious side effects. They include:

- loss of bone leading to osteoporosis
- eye problems such as cataracts or glaucoma
- problems fighting infection
- mood changes
- high blood pressure
- increased blood sugar and diabetes.

Take these medicines exactly as your health care provider prescribes. Do not take more or less or take them longer than prescribed. Do not suddenly stop taking steroidal medicines without your provider's approval. You may have to reduce your dosage gradually.

You should not take NSAIDs if you have been diagnosed with ulcer disease, or a bleeding disorder. Taking NSAIDs increases your risk of bleeding. You may need to stop taking these medicines before surgery or dental work. If you have asthma, ask your provider if you should use NSAIDs.

Remember your provider needs to know if you take any anti-inflammatory drugs. They can cause serious side effects and may interact with other medicines you are taking.

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