High Ulcer Risk from OTC Meds

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Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications, referred to as NSAIDs, are drugs that people take for the treatment of pain and inflammation. Over-the-counter options include aspirin, ibuprofen (Motrin), naproxen (Aleve), and indomethacin. Aspirin is also commonly utilized for its anti-platelet benefits in the treatment and prevention of heart disease. Most people will take NSAIDs for the treatment of pain (arthritis), headaches or to help shorten recovery time after an injury.

These medications, even at low doses, can cause injury to the stomach and intestinal lining, which can lead to significant complications.

Mild injury can include an upset stomach, but severe injury can lead to an ulcer which can sometimes bleed or even perforate. The main mechanism of damage is that NSAIDs block production of prostaglandins, chemicals which help to protect the inner lining of the stomach and intestinal tract. [pg 2]...

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Ulcers cont.
The risk of gastrointestinal complications increases with the duration of therapy. Administration of NSAIDs for a short period of time, typically less than 1 week, is unlikely to result in any significant injury. However, extended exposure to NSAIDs can lead to damage to the stomach and intestinal lining, even in patients taking low doses of aspirin.

Additional risk factors for complications from NSAID use include age > 60, high dosage exposure, prior history of peptic ulcer disease, and the use of steroids, blood thinners or anti-platelet agents (aspirin) with NSAIDs.

When using NSAIDs, it is important to take the lowest dose needed for the shortest period of time necessary to manage your symptoms. Your gastroenterologist can also prescribe medications that can help to protect the stomach and prevent complications related to NSAID exposure. These medications work by blocking stomach acid production, examples include Protonix, Nexium or Prilosec. If there is concern for an ulcer, an endoscopy may be needed.

COMMON NSAIDS
Aspirin (brand names include Bayer, Bufferin, and Ecotrin, St. Joseph)
Ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin)
Naproxen (Aleve, Anaprox DS, Naprosyn)
Celecoxib (Celebrex)
etodolac
indomethacin (Indocin)

SIX COLON CANCERS PREVENTED
As they awaken from colonoscopy sedation, patients are always surprised to learn that we found and removed precancerous polyps from their colon. We see this every day. They don’t realize that these polyps are very common. The war on colon cancer began in the 1960s at Beth Israel Medical Center in Manhattan when it was learned that finding and removing colon polyps could effectively PREVENT cancer.

Our GI practice has been performing screening exams since 1977. Unfortunately, there is no shortage of precancerous colon polyps. We remove them every day. The fight goes on today...as more than 50,000 Americans still die from colon and rectal cancer every year - almost all never bothered to have a colonoscopy.

Robert Fusco, MD 😞