

From Health Sciences Institute, Baltimore, MD 02/12/18

What's the first thing you do when you're sick with a fever... or in pain? If you're like most people, you probably reach for a Motrin, Advil Cold & Sinus, or maybe an aspirin.

All of these are known as over-the-counter non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, commonly called NSAIDs. They're among the easiest drugs to buy -- and in large quantities. So, they must be safe -- right?

Since these drugs have been around for so long, you might think that it couldn't possibly be dangerous to not follow the directions precisely and sometimes take a little bit more.

And if you do, you're not alone. Boston University researchers examined how these meds are being used in real life... and discovered that taking over-the-limit amounts is almost routine.

But these aren't the benign substances that drug makers want you to think they are. And haphazardly upping your dose can be a very bad mistake -- in some instances, even a fatal one.

Knowing what we now know about NSAIDs, it would likely be a tough haul to get them approved as OTC drugs today. And that's even considering the FDA's slapdash approval process!

Sure, the packages are lined with warnings, but based on these latest findings, it's clear that a lot of people aren't bothering to even glance at them... let alone read them.

And even if you did carefully examine those labels, you might underestimate the damage they can do.

So, here's the scary truth you need to know before the next time you head to that medicine cabinet.

Pop one of these drugs when you have a cold... or maybe the flu that's been slamming so many this year... and you can *triple* your risk of suffering a heart attack.

That finding was made public last year thanks to a large study out of Taiwan that analyzed the data on around 10,000 patients. And before that, even the FDA acknowledged that NSAIDs can up your risk of a heart attack or stroke *on the first dose!*

At the time, in fact, the division deputy director for NSAIDs noted that "there is no period of use shown to be without risk." That's quite a warning coming from an FDA official, given the agency's usual ho-hum attitude about drugs and their side effects!

Plus that, while these meds pose the biggest danger to those with existing heart conditions, they can still put your heart in danger even if you're as fit as a fiddle!

And as if that wasn't bad enough, there's the well-known risk of suffering gastrointestinal bleeding. While packages of NSAIDs warn about "stomach bleeding," that doesn't really drive home the danger.

NSAIDs can cause ulcers, tissue tears, and potentially life-threatening bleeds -- which, according to one study, sends over 100,000 Americans to the hospital every year.

It's possible that your gut could be bleeding right now... and you wouldn't even feel it.

And that's a risk even when these meds are taken as directed!

But what's especially alarming about the new research out of Boston is that it appears that people have become so nonchalant about using these drugs that they don't even attempt to follow the "take only as directed" warnings anymore!

For example, out of the 1,300 adults who were asked to complete NSAID "diaries" for a week, many reported taking amounts over the daily dosage, mixing two different kinds together, or swallowing another

dose before they should have.

All told, around 15 percent of those surveyed had technically "overdosed" several times a week!

Because NSAIDs are in a wide variety of both Rx and OTC meds (just like another extremely dangerous drug, acetaminophen, a.k.a. Tylenol, which you've read about right here in *eAlert*) it's easy to take a toxic amount without realizing it.

The bottom line is this: Only use these drugs when absolutely necessary --and if there's a safer alternative, try that first.

For instance, acupuncture and chiropractic adjustments have proven to be very effective in relieving chronic pain, and they have even been used for in place of opioids like morphine for ER patients!

And for muscle strains and arthritis relief, arnica is a well-known therapy that comes in the form of a cream or gel that can be rubbed on sore areas or as a homeopathic remedy to place under your tongue.

And if you do need to take a NSAID, you also need read the *all* of the warnings *and* the recommended dosage.

Then, follow them as if your life depends on it. Because it very well might!

To Treating Pain Naturally,

Melissa Young

*Sources:*

*"Opioids aren't America's only painkiller problem" Alan Mozes, February 1, 2018, Chicago Tribune, [chicagotribune.com](http://chicagotribune.com)*