

OTC Pain Meds and Your Blood Pressure

You're not alone if you have high blood pressure. About one in three adults have high blood pressure. Most people also have aches and pains once in a while. Nonprescription or over-the-counter (OTC) pain meds help with these aches and pains. But here's the catch: **some OTC pain meds might make your blood pressure go up.**

The OTC pain meds that can increase your blood pressure are called nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs. They're also called NSAIDs for short. Ibuprofen (*Motrin*, etc) and naproxen (*Aleve*, etc) are both NSAIDs.

There is more of a chance that an NSAID will increase your blood pressure if you are:

- Older
- A man
- Overweight
- A person who has diabetes or problems with your heart, kidneys, or liver

If you already have high blood pressure, taking an NSAID once in a while is usually okay. But if you take an NSAID every day for a week or more your blood pressure may go up. Also, your blood pressure medicine may not work as well. If you need to take an OTC pain med every day, then acetaminophen (*Tylenol*, etc) might be a better choice.

No matter which pain medicine you take, use the smallest dose that helps your pain. Take it for the shortest time that you can. Be sure to always follow the directions on the bottle.

If you need to take an NSAID every day, check with your prescriber first. Your prescriber will want to check your blood pressure more often. Your blood pressure meds might need to be changed if your blood pressure goes up. If your prescriber knows you take an NSAID, he or she can fine tune your blood pressure meds to work better.

[November 2011]