

# Health Awareness

## Use Your Head When It Comes To Pain Relief

(NAPSA)—Taking a minute to read the label on your pain reliever could be good for your health.

Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) are the most popular type of pain relievers in America. Each year, people take about 30 billion doses to treat occasional headaches or sore muscles and the frequent pain of chronic conditions such as arthritis.

NSAIDs are not habit forming and work well. They aren't expensive and can be purchased without a prescription or prescribed by your doctor. They are safe and effective for pain, fever and inflammation—for most people. But NSAIDs can harm your digestive tract, especially if you ignore directions and take them too often.

NSAIDs can interfere with the protective coating of the stomach. This allows stomach acid to harm the lining and leads to mild stomach upset or even ulcers and bleeding. People at higher risk for problems are those who are over age 60, have a history of stomach ulcers, take steroids such as prednisone, take blood thinners such as warfarin (Coumadin) or drink alcohol daily.

Never take more than the recommended dose, take the dose more often than recommended or combine two or more pain-relief medications, including low-dose aspirin. Don't use NSAIDs regularly for weeks or months.

Common over-the-counter NSAIDs include Advil, including Advil Cold & Sinus, Aleve, including Aleve Cold & Sinus, aspirin, Excedrin, ibuprofen, Motrin,



**NSAIDs provide safe and effective pain relief for most people but it is important to read the label and use them wisely.**

including Motrin IB Sinus, and Nuprin.

Signs of NSAID trouble include stomach pain that does not go away, dark black, tarry or bloody stools, or vomiting of blood or content that looks like coffee grounds.

Each year, problems from NSAIDs put more than 100,000 people in the hospital and result in thousands of deaths. You can reduce your risk by taking the time to read the labels carefully, following the package or doctor's instructions and informing your doctor and pharmacist about all the medications and supplements you are taking, including aspirin and over-the-counter NSAIDs.

If your NSAID use is causing problems, you have options for pain control. Consult with your doctor about switching pain relievers or trying medications that can reduce stomach acid.

For more information or to order brochures, you can call (866) 519-3299 or visit [www.gastro.org/patient](http://www.gastro.org/patient).