

SEE YOUR DOCTOR

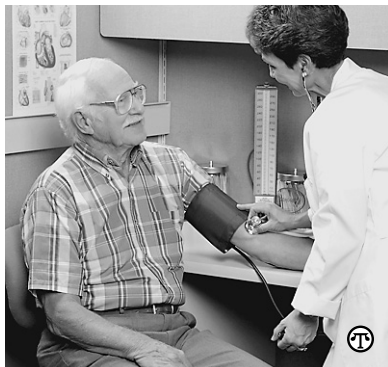
(NAPSA)—A visit to the doctor could ease the minds of many about how to ease an ache in their joints.

According to statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, approximately 70 million Americans have arthritis or chronic joint pain, but less than half report being under a doctor's care. Whether you've been diagnosed with arthritis or blame those aching joints on stress or overuse, taking over-the-counter (OTC) anti-inflammatory pain relievers day after day to treat pain without talking to your doctor about the risks may not be a good idea.

For many arthritis and joint pain sufferers, over-the-counter (OTC) non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs or NSAIDs, such as ibuprofen or naproxen, are the first line of treatment. Increased or prolonged use of these medications, however, may cause stomach bleeds, ulcers, and liver problems—often without warning. Studies show the use of NSAIDs causes 16,500 deaths and 103,000 hospitalizations in the U.S. a year.

"Too often, arthritis sufferers just want to get rid of the pain. They take more medicine than indicated on the label and don't talk to their doctor about possible risks," says Linda Golodner, president of the National Consumers League (NCL).

A survey commissioned by the NCL found 64 percent of respondents were unconcerned about the risks of serious side effects related



If you have arthritis—or just think you do—see your doctor for the best advice.

to OTC NSAID use. Only five percent reported discussing potential risks with a doctor.

For years arthritis was viewed as a condition only old people get, but research now shows 60 percent of arthritis sufferers are under the age of 65. Many choose to self-treat for pain and ignore symptoms including persistent pain, swelling, or morning stiffness lasting longer than 30 minutes, rather than seek a physician's advice.

"Talking to a physician or pharmacist is the only way to find out what's going on in the body and match it with the proper medication," adds Golodner. "Finding the safest treatment to manage arthritis pain may save your life."

For more information, and a free brochure, *OTC Pain Meds: What Helps, What Hurts*, call toll-free 866-216-2316 or visit www.nclnet.org/otcpain.