



WellnessOne Newsletter

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Taking These Common Pills? You're Playing "Russian Roulette" With Your Heart

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Drugs that include traditional non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) as well as new generation anti-inflammatory drugs (COX-2 inhibitors) have been linked to cardiovascular risks.

Researchers performed a comprehensive analysis of all randomized controlled trials that compared any NSAID with other NSAIDs or placebo. The analysis included more than 30 trials that examined in total more than 116,000 patients.

Drugs such as rofecoxib (Vioxx) and lumiracoxib were associated with twice the risk of heart attack, while ibuprofen was associated with more than three times the risk of stroke. Etoricoxib (Arcoxia) and diclofenac were associated with the highest risk of cardiovascular death.

Eurekalert reports:

"... [T]hese cardiovascular risks are worrying because many patients have both cardiovascular disease and musculoskeletal disease, and suggests that it is time for an evaluation of a broader range of alternatives."

In other drug news, the U.S. FDA has asked manufacturers of prescription drugs containing acetaminophen to limit the dosage of the drug and add a liver toxicity warning to labels. The warning will be a "boxed warning" -- the strongest warning for a prescription drug.

Prescription acetaminophen (a pain and fever reducer better known as Tylenol) must limit the drugs to no more than 325 milligrams per tablet or capsule. Currently, some products contain more than twice that amount.

Paging Dr. Gupta reports:



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"Overdose from prescription combination products containing acetaminophen account for nearly half of all cases of acetaminophen related liver failure in the United States, many of which result in liver transplant or death."

Sources:

- » [EurekaAlert January 18, 2011](#)
- » [BMJ January 11, 2011; 342:c7086](#)
- » [Paging Dr. Gupta January 13, 2011](#)

Dr. Mercola's Comments:

Millions of Americans depend on anti-inflammatory drugs to relieve pain from arthritis, headaches, injuries and countless other conditions that cause chronic pain, but the drugs are among the most dangerous on the market.

Beware of Taking These Common Painkillers if You Value Your Heart Health

Vioxx was among this same class of drugs, nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, or NSAIDS, and it was [pulled from the market in 2004](#) after 60,000 people died from its increased heart risks.



I issued the first public alert that Vioxx was dangerous and would cause an increased risk of cardiovascular diseases. That [warning came in 1999](#) -- one year before the drug was approved in the US and five years before it was eventually pulled from the market.

Later in 2004, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) also warned that NSAIDS, such as Cox-2 inhibitors Bextra (which was pulled from the market in 2005) and Celebrex, as well as over-the-counter varieties like Aleve, Ibuprofen and aspirin, also lead to an increased risk of cardiovascular problems.

In what's appearing very much like déjà vu, now a new study by researchers at The University of Bern in Switzerland revealed that NSAIDs lead to a two to fourfold increase in the risk of heart attacks, stroke or cardiovascular death, noting that it would only take 25-50 patients being treated with NSAIDs for one year to lead to an additional heart attack or stroke.

Risky Choices for Pain Relief

Aside from significantly increasing your heart risks, NSAIDs are linked to serious gastrointestinal risks, like bleeding of the digestive tract, increased blood pressure and

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[kidney problems](#). Remember, this applies not only to prescription medications like Celebrex but also over-the-counter drugs like aspirin, Advil and Motrin.

In fact, it's very difficult to find a drug-based method of pain relief that is not saddled with severe side effects. The FDA has even recently limited the amount of acetaminophen allowed in prescription products and added a boxed warning due to liver toxicity concerns.

Prescription products that contain acetaminophen (Tylenol) will now be required to limit the amount of the drug to no more than 325 milligrams per tablet, as taking too much is the [most common cause of acute liver failure](#) in the United States.

There are over-the-counter Tylenol products that currently contain well over 325 milligrams of acetaminophen however, and they will not be included in this new limit, even though they're easier to obtain, so you will have to watch out for this risk yourself.

But no matter what type of painkiller you choose, the bottom line to remember is that they do not come without risks! Unfortunately, if you visit your conventional physician with chronic pain, a long-term treatment plan will typically include a drug-combination approach, using anti-inflammatory drugs, anti-convulsants, muscle relaxants and possibly other types of pain medication as well.



In other words, the answer for pain relief is drugs, drugs and more drugs -- each one raising your risk of suffering potentially lethal side effects. Is there a better way?

A Safer Approach for Pain Relief

Many people reach for the pill bottle with little or no thought of what it might do to their health in the long run. But [tens of thousands of people die prematurely](#) each year as a result...

It's completely understandable to want to get rid of pain. However, please understand that there are many options other than prescription and over-the-counter painkillers that are much safer, even though they may require some patience

Seems far more rational to stick with natural approaches for inflammation as they don't kill you or cause permanent organ damage, and typically serve to actually prevent disease. My first and newest recommendation is now astaxanthin. It is the most powerful natural anti-inflammatory known and profoundly helpful for supporting heart and eye health.

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Here are several other guidelines that can help reduce, or potentially even eliminate, your pain, depending on its severity:

- **Start taking a high-quality, animal-based omega-3 fat.** My personal favorite is krill oil. Omega-3 fats are precursors to mediators of inflammation called prostaglandins. (In fact, that is how anti-inflammatory painkillers work, they manipulate prostaglandins.)
- **Eliminate or radically reduce most grains and sugars from your diet.** Avoiding grains and sugars will lower your insulin and leptin levels. Elevated insulin and leptin levels are one of the most important reasons why inflammatory prostaglandins are produced. That is why stopping sugar and sweets is so important to controlling your pain and other types of chronic illnesses.
- **[Optimize your production of vitamin D](#)** by getting regular, appropriate sun exposure, which will work through a variety of different mechanisms to reduce your pain.
- **Retool your diet based on your body's unique nutritional type.** Understanding your nutritional type is a tool I have seen work in thousands of patients to reduce their pain.
- **Use effective stress relief tools**, such as the **[Emotional Freedom Technique \(EFT\)](#)**. EFT can address your previous emotional traumas that cause bioelectrical short circuiting, predisposing you to immune dysfunction.
- **Use safer alternatives for temporary relief**, while you are in the process of implementing the above strategies.



As you can see from the list above, there is no "quick fix" to treating pain, but rather it requires a lifestyle change that will be well worth the effort – and far safer than resorting to potentially deadly pain-relieving drugs.

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