

Pain-relief primer

YOU'VE GOT a headache. Or you twisted your ankle. Perhaps you're feverish. Different pains and ailments require different treatments. However, choosing the right painkiller off the shelf can be a headache-inspiring experience of its own.

There are three primary products for the prevention and treatment of pain and other related bodily miseries: aspirin, acetaminophen and ibuprofen. While they have some similarities, picking the wrong one may delay or hamper your recovery, or create new problems.

Aspirin

An anti-inflammatory drug as well as a painkiller, aspirin reduces swelling so that the pain is less likely to recur when the analgesic properties of the aspirin wear off.

Aspirin is also an anticoagulant, which means that it helps to keep the blood thin enough so as not to clot. People who have a history of heart attack or stroke and those at risk are often advised by their doctor to take small daily doses of aspirin as a preventive measure.

However, aspirin can induce gastrointestinal discomfort if taken in large enough doses. It can also cause Reye's syndrome if taken by



MEDIA BAKERY

children and adolescents who are infected with a virus such as chicken pox or influenza.

Acetaminophen

Popular in part because it is less likely to cause stomach upset, acetaminophen is used for the relief of fever as well as aches and pains associated with many conditions.

Acetaminophen relieves pain in mild

arthritis but, unlike aspirin, has no effect on the underlying inflammation, redness and swelling of the joint.

Acetaminophen began as a children's medication and is still the preferred pain reliever for children because of the connection between Reye's syndrome and aspirin.

Acetaminophen is metabolized by the liver. Its potential to harm the liver is increased when it is combined with alcohol.

Ibuprofen

Ibuprofen is twice as potent as aspirin as an anti-inflammatory.

Ibuprofen is an effective and well-tolerated analgesic for general use. It can provide relief from headaches, migraine, backache, dental pain, muscular pain, menstrual pain, cold and flu symptoms, and feverishness.

Ibuprofen can cause stomach upset.

Naproxen sodium

There are also more specialized drugs for headaches and arthritis, including naproxen sodium. Naproxen sodium is a powerful, formerly prescription-only pain reliever. It works by inhibiting prostaglandins (the body's chemical messengers), as aspirin does. But, also like aspirin, it can cause stomach upset and other gastrointestinal problems.

As with any medication, consult your physician or pharmacist about proper use.

—T. Foster Jones

	Aspirin	Acetaminophen	Ibuprofen	Naproxen Sodium
BRANDS	Bayer, Excedrin, Kirkland Signature™	Tylenol, Kirkland Signature	Advil, Motrin, Kirkland Signature	Aleve, Kirkland Signature
CLASS	Anti-inflammatory, analgesic, anti-arthritis	Analgesic, fever reducer	Anti-inflammatory, analgesic, fever reducer, anti-arthritis	Anti-inflammatory, anti-arthritis, fever reducer
USE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relieves pain and reduces fever in adults; relieves mild itching Reduces swelling and inflammation Used to treat arthritis, many other conditions and injuries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relieves mild pain Reduces fever 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relieves pain Reduces fever Reduces inflammation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relieves mild to moderate pain Reduces fever Reduces inflammation
CAUTIONS	<p>Caution is advised if you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> get stomach irritation when taking aspirin are allergic to aspirin are taking blood-thinning medication have a hangover <p>A person should not take aspirin if he/she has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ulcers, gout, asthma, hearing loss 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High doses or regular, long-term use can cause liver damage, especially if used with alcohol Should not be used to treat fever higher than 103.1 F for more than three days Should not be used to treat fevers that keep coming back Should not be used on a regular basis by people who suffer from anemia or liver or kidney disease 	<p>Caution is advised if you have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> asthma and nasal polyps a stomach or intestinal disorder a skin condition called angioedema an allergic reaction to other anti-inflammatory medications liver or kidney disease a blood-clotting disorder heart failure <p>Not to be used with aspirin, alcohol or steroids</p>	<p>Caution is advised if you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> are taking blood pressure medication are taking oral blood thinners or anticoagulants have an aspirin allergy have asthma have a stomach disorder have a blood-clotting disorder are pregnant (third trimester)
REMARKS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children and teenagers should not take aspirin because it is associated with a rare disorder called Reye's syndrome in these age groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Works well for people who can't take aspirin because of aspirin-related allergic reactions, stomach irritation or ringing in the ears 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Less irritating to the stomach than aspirin for some Does not cause ringing in the ears, unlike aspirin Does not cause liver damage, unlike acetaminophen 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Less irritating to the gastrointestinal tract Lower incidence of liver or kidney complications

Pregnant women should consult a doctor prior to taking any over-the-counter medication. Other people, including persons with medical conditions, are advised to read product labels carefully and consult a pharmacist if they have any questions

about proper use. Sources: Aspirin Foundation (www.aspirin-foundation.com); MedicineNet.com (www.medicinenet.com); International Ibuprofen Foundation (www.ibuprofen-foundation.com)