

OVER-THE-COUNTER PAIN MEDICATION

There are two types of over-the-counter (OTC) pain pills. Both types can be taken together, and at the same time. Their pain-relieving effects are additive.

Tylenol (acetaminophen)

Non-narcotic, safe

Inexpensive, comes in generic

Regular strength is 325mg

Extra-strength is 500mg

The dose is 1000mg 3-4 times per day.

It lasts about 4 hours.

Many over the counter pain and cold preparations contain acetaminophen. It is also a fever reducer. It is not an anti-inflammatory.

Narcotic prescription pain pills are often sold as combination pills, containing both the narcotic and Tylenol (acetaminophen) (such as vicodin, norco, lortab, percocet, roxicet). So if you are taking any of these prescription pain medications be aware that the maximum daily recommended dose of acetaminophen is 3000mg per day.

Non-steroidal Anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs)

Ibuprofen (Advil)

Sold over the counter as 200mg pills

Inexpensive, comes in generics

Can take 1-3 pills every 6 hours or up to four times per day

Lasts about 6 hours

Do not take if you are already taking a prescription NSAID (there are many) as there is just extra risk and no extra pain relief.

Do not take both ibuprofen and naproxen at the same time

Ok to take with one baby aspirin or one regular aspirin per day (often used as a mild blood thinner)

Naproxen (Aleve)

Sold over the counter as 220mg pills

Inexpensive, comes in generics

Can take 1-2 pills twice a day (lasts 12 hours)

Do not take if you are already taking a prescription NSAID (there are many) as there is just extra risk and no extra pain relief.

Ok to take with one baby aspirin or one regular aspirin per day (often used as a mild blood thinner)

Aspirin

Sold as 325 mg pills

Can take 2-4 pills up to four times per day