



A Detailed Description of Painkillers

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DESCRIPTION

Painkillers, whether over the counter or prescription, help manage chronic pain and other types of pain. They are powerful drugs, so it is important to use them with caution. It is best to start the safest drug in the shortest amount of time with the least effective dose and work from there as needed. Be aware of possible side effects and interactions with other medications and dietary supplements you are taking. And always follow the instructions on the label or your doctor's prescription. There are different types of painkillers. Which one is best for you depend on many factors, including the cause and severity of the pain.

The types of painkillers are:

- Over-the-counter (OTC): These drugs are commercially available. Any adult can buy it.
- Prescription: These medicines are not available without a prescription. Prescription painkillers provide greater pain relief. They treat severe or chronic pain.

Over-the-counter (OTC) and prescription painkillers treat a variety of problems. Over-the-counter drugs relieve arthritis, headaches, and pain caused by muscle tension. Prescription analgesics provide greater relief for chronic or severe pain after trauma or surgery. Opioids and some antidepressants and antiepileptic drugs also relieve pain.

Over-the-counter (OTC) painkillers include:

- Paracetamol: This drug (Tylenol®) weakens the receptors for pain in the brain. This means that you will feel less pain.
- Nonsteroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs): NSAIDs reduce the production of prostaglandins. Chemicals like these hormones stimulate nerve endings, causing inflammation and pain. NSAIDs include aspirin compounds (Excedrin®), ibuprofen (Advil® and Motrin®), and naproxen sodium (Aleve®).
- Combination: Some painkillers contain both acetaminophen and aspirin (NSAID). Certain OTC headache medications also include caffeine.
- Topical: Apply this painkiller directly to the skin. Delivered in creams, gels, sprays or patches. Topical drugs block the receptors for pain in the brain. They may contain aspirin, lidocaine, capsaicin pepper, or other medications. Some topical treatments make the

skin feel warm or cold. Common brands are Aspercreme® and BenGay®.

Risk

Follow the instructions on the label, OTC painkillers are relatively safe. Paracetamol and NSAIDs can strain the liver and kidneys. If you have kidney or liver disease, do not take them.

Risk of paracetamol: Taking more than 3,000 milligrams daily increases the risk of liver damage from acetaminophen. Combining drugs with alcohol can also cause liver problems.

Aspirin risk: Children under the age of 18 should not take aspirin. It can cause a life-threatening condition called Reye's syndrome. Give another NSAID instead.

Risk of NSAIDs: With the exception of aspirin (thinning blood), long-term use of NSAIDs may increase the risk of heart attack and stroke. People with existing heart problems and high blood pressure are at greatest risk. Contact your doctor if you need an NSAID for more than 10 days.

Prescription pain relievers

Antidepressants: Antidepressants act on chemicals in the brain called neurotransmitters. These medications are ideal for chronic pain, including migraine headaches. The greatest pain relief is due to tricyclic antidepressants (Elavil®) and serotonin norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors (SNRIs) such as Effexor® and Cymbalta®. Studies show that selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) like Prozac® have no effect on pain. SSRIs may reduce the effectiveness of other painkillers.

Antiepileptic drugs: Antiepileptic drugs block pain signals to the brain. Types include gabapentin (Gabarone®) and pregabalin (Lyrica®). These drugs can relieve nerve pain and fibromyalgia.

Muscle relaxants: These drugs relieve pain by relaxing tight muscles. It also relieves muscle spasms.

Opioids: Opioids are laboratory-made narcotic analgesics. They change the way your brain recognizes pain messages. Health providers rarely prescribe opioids for chronic pain because they can be addictive. Take opioids for a short time after surgery or trauma. Codeine, fentanyl, hydrocodone, and morphine are all opioids.

Steroids: Corticosteroids are powerful anti-inflammatory drugs.

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Like NSAIDs, they prevent your body from making chemicals that cause irritation and inflammation. Steroids like Prednisone® treat migraine, severe arthritis, and back pain.

Topical: Doctors can choose from prescription skin creams, gels, sprays and patches. They can relieve muscle pain, arthritis, and fibromyalgia. Types include Lidocaine (Lidoderm®) skin patches.

Prescription painkillers are powerful drugs. They have a higher risk of problems than OTC drugs. Opioids are addictive and can lead to substance abuse. To reduce this risk, healthcare providers prescribe opioids only for short-term use. For example, you can take opioids for a few days after surgery. Prescription painkillers can cause the following side effects:

- Blurred vision.
- Constipation.

- Thirst.
- Malaise.
- Headache.
- Insomnia.
- Feeling uneven.
- Nausea.
- Urination problems.
- Weight gain.