

# Anti-inflammatory Medications

**Taking an anti-inflammatory medication, such as ibuprofen (Advil®/Motrin®), offers two benefits:**

**1. analgesic effect (addresses pain), and 2. anti-inflammatory effect (addresses swelling and inflammation).**

For example, if you are experiencing shoulder pain due to local inflammation, the typical prescription will require you take the medication three times per day for a minimum of fourteen days, but usually for one month. Within hours of taking the first dose, most people experience some level of pain relief. Often after a few days or a week, they will cease taking the prescribed medication as their pain is gone. They soon find that their pain quickly returns and they blame the medication that, "Didn't help!"

What was experienced in the first few days was the analgesic or pain masking effect of the medication. Within 4 to 6 hours of taking the prescription, the blood levels of the medication peaked and the analgesic effect was present. About the time the blood levels started to drop, the second dose of the day was taken, thus the analgesic effect was continued. For a mild headache, one dose of the prescription may be enough to permanently eliminate the pain. For a common inflammatory condition of the shoulder, knee, low back, etc., the patient has not sustained the dosage long enough (2 - 4 weeks) or consistently enough (3x/day without skipping doses) to address the inflammation, only the pain (analgesia).



For an anti-inflammatory benefit, (to actually treat the tendon or joint inflammation) the anti-inflammatory medication must be present long enough (2 - 4 weeks) and in high enough blood level concentrations (3x/day consistently) in order to break up the chemical cascade of events that occur in the body and break down the chemical mediators for inflammation (prostaglandin, histamines, bradykinin). In Layman's terms, stopping your anti-inflammatory medications too early will allow the inflammatory process to continue.

Many people are concerned about the effects of taking these medications consistently for 2 to 4 weeks. Remember that these anti-inflammatory medications were generated for folks with arthritis and many arthritis sufferers take these medications daily for years. The studies examining the safety of these medications on the human body (liver and kidney specifically) have focused on those types of patients taking daily doses consistently for 2 to 5 years. Patients prescribed a 30-day dose do not even fall on the charts for these risks.

For many, stomach irritation is a primary concern of these short doses. Direction is given to drink a large glass of water when taking the medication to aide in dissolving the tablet and to eat a meal at the same time to aide in absorption (a meal is more than coffee and toast). If stomach discomfort still occurs, simply stop taking the medication and consult with a physician for alternative medications that may work for you. Our G.I. physician recommends all clients taking anti-inflammatory medications in this manner take a daily dose of Prilosec® (omeprazole) to protect the stomach lining. As always, before using medications for your condition, consult with a physician.