

[IMAGE]

## More on the Dangers of NSAIDs

Another day, another report of the potential dangers of nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs). Millions of people take NSAIDs each year for a number of conditions, specifically to relieve pain and reduce inflammation. However, these analgesic and anti-inflammatory benefits can be accompanied by dangerous side effects, particularly gastrointestinal complications.

How dangerous are NSAIDs? A British study in the journal *Pain* reviewed 49 randomized, controlled trials with data on gastric or duodenal ulcer, ulcer hemorrhage or perforation, and death attributable to NSAID (aspirin) use. The authors estimated that one in 1,200 patients taking NSAIDs for at least two months died from gastroduodenal complications. They also estimated that 2,000 people in the United Kingdom die each year from gastroduodenal lesions who would not have died if they were not taking NSAIDs.

The authors are quick to note that different NSAIDs are no doubt associated with different degrees or types of risk, and that these risks may be influenced by patient-related factors such as age or disease. However, they also note that their results "strongly" suggest that chronic oral NSAIDs pose a high risk of adverse effects and urge that "patients receive minimum effective doses for the minimum possible time."

Always ask your doctor about the potential risks of any medications you may be taking, and inquire about possible nonpharmaceutical alternatives to managing your condition.

### *Reference:*

Tramer MR, Moore RA, Reynolds DJM, et al. Quantitative estimation of rare adverse events which follow a biological progression: a new model applied to chronic NSAID use. *Pain* 2000: Vol. 85, pp169-82.

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