# NSAIDs

**Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) are medications widely used to relieve pain, reduce inflammation, and bring down a high temperature (fever).**

They're often used to relieve symptoms of [headaches](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/headaches/), [painful periods](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/period-pain/), [sprains and strains](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/sprains-and-strains/), [colds](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/common-cold/) and [flu](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/flu/), [arthritis](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/arthritis/), and other causes of long-term pain.

Although NSAIDs are commonly used, they're not suitable for everyone and can sometimes cause troublesome side effects.

Types of NSAIDs

NSAIDs are available as tablets, capsules, suppositories (capsules inserted into the bottom), creams, gels and injections.

Some can be bought over the counter from pharmacies, while others need a prescription.

* high-dose aspirin (low-dose aspirin isn't normally considered to be an NSAID)

NSAIDs may be sold under these names or a brand name. They're all similarly effective, although you may find a particular one works best for you.

## Who can take NSAIDs?

Most people can take NSAIDs, but some people need to be careful about taking them.

doctor for advice before taking an NSAID if you:

* are over 65 years of age
* are pregnant or trying for a baby
* are breastfeeding
* have [asthma](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/asthma/)
* have had an [allergic reaction](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/allergies/symptoms/) to NSAIDs in the past
* have had [stomach ulcers](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stomach-ulcer/) in the past
* have any problems with your heart, liver, kidneys, blood pressure, circulation, or bowels
* are taking other medications
* are looking for medication for a child under 16 (any medication that contains aspirin shouldn't be given to children under 16)

## Side effects of NSAIDs

Like all medications, there's a risk of side effects from NSAIDs. These tend to be more common if you're taking high doses for a long time, or you're elderly or in poor general health.

Over-the-counter NSAIDs generally have fewer side effects than stronger prescription medicines.

Possible side effects of NSAIDs include:

* [indigestion](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/indigestion/) – including [stomach aches](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stomach-ache/), feeling sick and [diarrhoea](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/diarrhoea/)
* [stomach ulcers](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stomach-ulcer/) – these can cause internal bleeding and [anaemia](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/iron-deficiency-anaemia/); extra medication, such as proton pump inhibitors (PPIs), may be prescribed to help reduce this risk
* a hole forming in the wall of your stomach or bowel
* [headaches](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/headaches/)
* drowsiness
* [dizziness](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/dizziness/)
* allergic reactions
* in rare cases, problems with your liver, kidneys, or heart and circulation, such as [heart failure](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/heart-failure/), [heart attacks](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/heart-attack/) and [strokes](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stroke/)