This brochure gives you information about osteoarthritis and the medicines most commonly used to manage it. You’ll learn how these medicines compare and get important information about side effects and safety. You’ll also receive self-care tips to help you feel better.
What is osteoarthritis?

Osteoarthritis is wear and tear on your joints. It causes the tissue that pads your joints to break down. This tissue is called cartilage. The tissue slowly wears away until the bones rub against each other. This causes pain and damages the bones.

Osteoarthritis happens most often in your knees, hips, back and hands, but it can hurt other joints too.

Healthy joints help your body move, bend and twist. Your knees glide up and down stairs without creaking or crunching. Your hips move you along on a walk without a complaint.

When osteoarthritis attacks your joints, these simple, everyday movements can hurt. Taking the stairs can be painful. Walking a few steps, opening a door and even combing your hair can be hard.

You cannot cure osteoarthritis, but you can do things to help your pain and make it easier for you to move. And you can do things to keep the damage from getting worse.

More information

Go to www.aarp.org/rxoptions and enter code Z973 in the search box, or select the code from the drop-down menu next to the search box.
What can I do to help myself?

Activity and exercise

Activity and exercise that don’t put a lot of pressure on your joints may help you. Walk, don’t jog, because jogging stresses your joints. Swimming and bicycling also put little stress on your joints.

Having stronger muscles can reduce stress on some joints. Talk to your doctor about exercises that build muscle but won’t hurt your joints.

Stretching can help with stiffness and range of motion.

Always talk to your doctor before starting an exercise or activity program.

Weight

If you are overweight, losing weight is one of the best things you can do for your osteoarthritis. Losing just a few pounds can help.

Ice and heat

Ice and heat can help ease pain and swelling. Use whatever helps the most. Use heat 2 or 3 times a day for 10 to 15 minutes. Do not use heat on a swollen joint. If the joint is swollen, use ice or cold packs for 10 to 15 minutes, once an hour.

Devices

Use a cane, crutch, walker or another device if you need help to get around. These devices can take stress off your joints when you are moving around. Other devices that may help you include a higher toilet seat and padded handles on kitchen utensils.
Which medicines treat osteoarthritis?

Medicine can help you relieve the pain of osteoarthritis and let you continue daily activities.

The first medicine you may try is acetaminophen (Tylenol). You can buy this medicine without a prescription. Acetaminophen can help your pain but does not reduce inflammation or swelling. Read the instructions on how much acetaminophen to take. Taking too much acetaminophen may damage your liver.

If acetaminophen does not help, many people take nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs). NSAIDs (say “EN-seds”) not only help your pain, but also reduce the inflammation or swelling that osteoarthritis causes.

NSAIDs are available as prescription or over-the-counter (OTC) medicines. Prescription and OTC medicines may differ in how potent they are. How much you take and how often you take them also may vary.

NSAIDs do not cure osteoarthritis or stop how fast tissue breaks down. They only relieve symptoms. Talk with your doctor about what else you can do for osteoarthritis.

Both prescription and OTC medicines are safest when you use them for a short period of time. Talk to your doctor about the best way to use either of these medicines.
What are some common NSAIDs?

The table below lists some common NSAIDs. Not all NSAIDs are listed. Your doctor may have prescribed an NSAID not listed here based on your symptoms and needs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brand name</th>
<th>Generic name</th>
<th>Generic available?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>NSAIDs available OTC</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bayer, Bufferin</td>
<td>aspirin</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NSAIDs available by prescription or OTC</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advil, Motrin*</td>
<td>ibuprofen</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aleve, Anaprox*</td>
<td>naproxen</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NSAIDs available by prescription only</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celebrex**</td>
<td>celecoxib</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lodine</td>
<td>etodolac</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indocin</td>
<td>indomethacin</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oruvail</td>
<td>ketoprofen</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobic</td>
<td>meloxicam</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Relafen</td>
<td>nabumetone</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daypro</td>
<td>oxaprozin</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feldene</td>
<td>piroxicam</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinoril</td>
<td>sulindac</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Higher strengths of these medicines are available by prescription

**Celebrex is a COX-2 inhibitor type of NSAID
What are generic medicines?

All medicines contain an active ingredient, which is the same as the generic name. The active ingredient is what makes the medicine “work.”

What is a brand name?

When drug companies develop a new medicine, they patent it so no one else can make it or sell it for a certain amount of time. The brand name is the name the drug company gives to the medicine. It is the first name most people hear for a medicine because of advertising in magazines and on television.

But I’ve heard more than one brand name, haven’t I?

After a medicine patent expires, other companies can make and sell the medicine. Sometimes these companies call it by the generic name, the name of the active ingredient. But companies also can give it their own brand names.

This means a medicine made with one active ingredient can have many names. For example:

- Ibuprofen is the active ingredient and generic name for one NSAID.
- Advil and Motrin are both brand names for ibuprofen.
Are brand-name medicines better than generic medicines?

Generic medicines work the same way brand-name medicines work, but they usually cost less. Your doctor may be able to prescribe a generic medicine if it’s available and right for you.

A generic medicine may be available for some forms of a medicine, but not for others.
Are some NSAIDs better than others?

Is one medicine really more effective than another? The Drug Effectiveness Review Project (DERP)* tries to answer that question.

Research on all the NSAIDs listed in the table on page 5 has been reviewed.

Some DERP findings are listed below.**

• No NSAID is better than another in reducing pain, inflammation or swelling.

• One NSAID may work better for some people than others. This is based on the way a person reacts to the NSAID, not on age, gender or race.

• All NSAIDs increase your chances of developing an ulcer.

*DERP (www.ohsu.edu/drugeffectiveness) began in 2001 when the state of Oregon started funding research on the effectiveness and safety of comparable drugs. Since then, other states and nonprofits have joined with Oregon to fund and use the research. DERP does not accept funding from drug companies.

**All evidence-based DERP reports can be found at www.ohsu.edu/drugeffectiveness/reports/final.cfm. DERP has not reviewed the content of this brochure.
What do I need to know?

Before taking NSAIDs, tell your doctor if:

• You have diabetes, high blood pressure, anemia, or heart, liver or kidney disease.
• You are taking medicine for a mental health problem, such as depression.
• You are taking aspirin for any reason.
• You are taking other medicines for osteoarthritis.
• You are taking water pills (diuretics) or blood thinners. Blood thinners include warfarin (such as Coumadin), clopidogrel (Plavix) and heparin.
• You are taking corticosteroids, such as prednisone.
• You have ulcers or a history of bleeding in your stomach or intestines.
• You bleed or bruise easily.
• You have more than 3 alcoholic drinks a day. This increases your chance of stomach bleeding.
Effectiveness

• DERP research has shown that no NSAID relieves pain or inflammation better than another. You may want to talk with your doctor about choosing an NSAID based on its side effects, how often you have to take it and how easy it is to use.

• Try to take the lowest dose possible. Your doctor may suggest taking a higher dose for a short period of time followed by a lower dose or taking NSAIDs only when you need them.

• You may find that an NSAID does not help you or that an NSAID that helped you at first no longer helps. Talk to your doctor about trying another NSAID.
Safety

• All NSAIDs increase your chance of getting an ulcer or bleeding in your stomach or intestines. This is more likely to happen if you are age 65 or older, take corticosteroids or blood thinners or have had ulcers or bleeding before. Having black stools that look like tar or vomiting blood may mean you have bleeding in your stomach or intestines. Seek medical help right away if you have these symptoms.

• NSAIDs can trigger heartburn, which is a burning discomfort below the breastbone. If you take an NSAID after eating or with an antacid, you are less likely to have an upset stomach or heartburn.

• NSAIDs may increase your chance of heart attack and stroke. Ask your doctor if they are right for you.

• Do not use more than one type of NSAID at the same time. For example, do not use ibuprofen when you are using naproxen. Combining NSAIDs makes side effects more likely.

• Keep all medicines out of the reach of children.
What about side effects?

All medicines have side effects. Talk to your doctor or pharmacist about what side effects to expect when you take NSAIDs. Ask if there are any serious side effects you should report to your doctor.

Usually the benefits of the medicine are more important than minor side effects. But if side effects continue to bother you and you are wondering whether you should continue to take the medicine, call your doctor.

Possible side effects

Most people who take NSAIDs have few side effects. Possible side effects include an upset stomach or diarrhea, or feeling dizzy or lightheaded.

Serious side effects

Call your doctor or 911 right away or go to the emergency room if you have any of the following rare side effects:

- You vomit blood or something that looks like coffee grounds, or you have black stools that look like tar. These are signs of an ulcer or bleeding in the stomach or intestines.
- You have severe belly pain or cramps.
- You have chest pain.
- You have a hard time breathing, get hives, or have swelling of your face, lips, tongue or throat. These are signs of an allergic reaction.
How can I manage my medicines?

Avoid side effects and interactions

Medicines are more likely to interact, cause side effects or harm you if:

• You are taking high doses.
• You have another health problem.
• Your health or a health problem you have is not stable (is changing).
• You are taking many medicines that your body processes in a similar way.

The best way to manage your medicines and help your doctor, pharmacist or other health care professional is to keep a personal medication record (PMR). The PMR gives you a place to list all the medicines you take, the doses and how they are taken. This includes over-the-counter medicines and dietary supplements. Sharing this list with your health care providers will help you avoid drug interactions.

You also can put all your medicines in a bag and take them with you when you see your doctor. Include all supplements, herbs, vitamins and minerals you are taking.

Using one pharmacy makes drug interactions less likely. The pharmacist will know which medicines you are taking and watch for interactions. Some pharmacies will keep your PMR up to date for you.
Work with your doctor and pharmacist

Here are some questions you can ask:

• What is the name of this medicine? What does it do? What are the side effects? What should I do if I forget to take it?

• When do I start and stop taking this medicine? How do I take it? How should I store it?

• At what time do I take this medicine? Should I take this medicine before meals, after meals, with meals or on an empty stomach? Should I avoid certain foods or drinks with this medicine?

• Will this medicine work safely with other medicines I am taking?

• Can I do anything instead of or along with taking my medicine to help my symptoms?

• Is there another medicine I can use? Does it work well, and is it safe? Is there a generic or less expensive medicine I can take?

More information

Go to www.aarp.org/rxoptions and enter V801 in the search box, or select the code from the drop-down menu next to the search box. You’ll get more on working with your doctor and forms to help you manage your medicine.
AARP and Walgreens: Knowledge You Can Trust

AARP and Walgreens are working together to put adults 50 and over in charge of their medicine, health and lives. Through this alliance, AARP and Walgreens will work together to ensure that Americans 50+ have the tools that they need to take greater control of their health. A primary focus of the alliance will be to help educate the nation’s 50+ population about the wise use of medicines.

Know Your Rx Options brochures

- Acid Reflux (GERD)
- Allergic Rhinitis
- Chronic Pain
- Dementia and Alzheimer's disease
- High Blood Pressure
- High Cholesterol
- Insomnia
- Nausea and Vomiting
- Osteoarthritis
- Urinary Incontinence

Visit the AARP-Walgreens Alliance Web site at www.aarp.org/walgreens.

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Founded in 1901, Walgreen Co. has been a leader in providing innovative, high quality and convenient healthcare services and consumer goods for over 105 years. Today there are over 5,700 Walgreens located across the USA and Puerto Rico, many with Drive-Thru pharmacy service, One Hour photofinishing and printer cartridge refills. Over 1,600 Walgreens are open 24-hours a day, seven days a week to provide service when it's most needed. At Walgreens.com, customers have access to digital photo services, a complete health library, Care Giver resources, online prescription refill ordering and much more.