



(Link: www.nhs.uk/)

Ibuprofen for adults (Nurofen)

Other common brands: Brufen, Calprofen, Fenbid, Ibugel, Ibuleve

Ibuprofen is a painkiller that helps relieve pain and reduce swelling (inflammation). You can buy most types from shops and pharmacies, but some types are only available with a prescription.

This information is for adults aged 18 or over. There's separate information about ibuprofen for children (Link: www.nhs.uk/medicines/ibuprofen-for-children/).

What ibuprofen is for

Ibuprofen is a type of painkiller called a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) (Link: www.nhs.uk/medicines/nsaids/).

Ibuprofen and other NSAIDs can help with lots of types of pain, including:

- headaches and migraines
- joint and muscle pain
- pain after an injury
- toothache
- period pain

Ibuprofen can also help reduce a high temperature (fever).

Ibuprofen can cause more side effects than paracetamol (Link: www.nhs.uk/medicines/paracetamol-for-adults/). If you can take paracetamol, it's a good idea to try it before taking ibuprofen.

How to take ibuprofen and how much to take (dose)

There are several different types of ibuprofen, including:

- tablets and capsules

- gels and sprays
- liquid
- granules you mix with water

How you use your medicine and how much to use depends on which type it is and how much ibuprofen it contains.

Always check the packet or leaflet that comes with your medicine. Ask a pharmacist or doctor for advice if you're not sure how to use it or have any problems using it.

If a doctor prescribes ibuprofen for you, follow the advice they give you about how to use it and how much to use.

How to take common types of ibuprofen

[200mg tablets and capsules](#)

For most 200mg tablets and capsules:

- swallow 1 or 2 tablets or capsules whole with water (ideally with or after food)
- take them up to 3 times a day if you're still in pain
- wait at least 4 hours between each dose
- do not take more than 6 tablets or capsules in 24 hours

There are also some tablets and capsules that you take in a different way, such as tablets that dissolve on your tongue or "long-lasting" capsules that should be taken less often.

Follow the instructions on the packet or leaflet that comes with your medicine to make sure you're taking it correctly.

[400mg tablets and capsules](#)

If you're taking 400mg ibuprofen tablets or capsules:

- swallow 1 tablet or capsule whole with water (ideally with or after food)
- take it up to 3 times a day if you're still in pain
- wait at least 4 hours between each dose
- do not take more than 3 tablets or capsules in 24 hours

[Gel or spray](#)

If you're using ibuprofen gel or spray:

- apply the gel or spray to the painful area and gently rub it into your skin – check the packet or leaflet to see how much to use
- take care to avoid getting it into your eyes, mouth or on any broken skin, and wash your hands after using it
- use it up to 3 or 4 times a day if you're still in pain – check the packet or leaflet to see how many times you can use it
- wait at least 4 hours between each use
- do not use it more than 4 times in 24 hours
- do not smoke or go near naked flames, as clothes that have been in contact with ibuprofen gel or spray can burn more easily

Important

To reduce the risk of side effects, take the smallest dose you need for the shortest time you need it.

Do not take ibuprofen tablets and capsules for more than 10 days unless advised to by a doctor.

For other types of ibuprofen, check the packet or leaflet to see how long you can use it for.

See a GP if your pain gets worse or does not go away.

If you take too much ibuprofen

Taking an extra dose of ibuprofen is unlikely to cause problems, but it's important to get medical advice if you take too much as it can sometimes be dangerous.

Get help from NHS 111 if:

- you've taken more ibuprofen tablets, capsules, liquid or granules than it says on the packet or leaflet
- you've accidentally swallowed ibuprofen gel or spray and feel unwell

You can call 111 or get help from 111 online (Link: <https://111.nhs.uk/triage/check-your-symptoms>).

If you're told to go to A&E, do not drive. Ask someone to drive you or call 999 and ask for an ambulance.

Bring the ibuprofen packet or leaflet inside it, any remaining medicine, and any other medicines you take.

Side effects of ibuprofen

Like all medicines, ibuprofen can cause side effects, although not everyone gets them.

Common side effects

Common side effects of ibuprofen tablets, capsules, liquid and granules include:

- indigestion and stomach aches
- feeling sick (nausea) and being sick (vomiting)
- headaches
- a rash
- dizziness
- diarrhoea or constipation

You're less likely to get side effects from ibuprofen gel or spray.

Ibuprofen will not usually affect your ability to drive, ride a bike or use machinery, but if you feel dizzy after taking it, wait until the dizziness stops.

Speak to a pharmacist or doctor if:

- you have any side effects that bother you or do not go away

They may be able to give you advice about how you can reduce the side effects.



Find a pharmacy (Link: <https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/pharmacy/find-a-pharmacy>)

Serious side effects

Ibuprofen can sometimes cause serious side effects, although most of them are rare.

Possible serious side effects of ibuprofen include:

- stomach ulcers (Link: www.nhs.uk/conditions/stomach-ulcer/) or bleeding inside your stomach – causing symptoms such as tummy pain, shortness of breath, pale skin, vomiting blood or poo that's black, sticky and tar-like
- an allergic reaction (anaphylaxis (Link: www.nhs.uk/conditions/anaphylaxis/)) – causing symptoms such as a swollen throat or tongue, a raised, itchy rash or difficulty breathing
- a problem with your kidneys – causing symptoms such as shortness of breath, blood in your pee or swelling in your ankles, feet or hands

The risk of serious side effects is higher if you're taking a high dose of ibuprofen or taking it for a long time.

Call NHS 111 if:

- you're taking ibuprofen and think you might be having serious side effects

More about side effects

These are not all the side effects of ibuprofen.

For a full list, see the leaflet that comes with your medicine or search for your medicine leaflet on the electronic medicines compendium website (Link: <https://www.medicines.org.uk/emc/browse-medicines>).

You can report any side effects you get on the Yellow Card website (Link: <https://yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk/>)

Who can and cannot use ibuprofen

Most adults can use ibuprofen.

But ibuprofen is not suitable for everyone. For example, it may not be suitable if:

- you've had an allergic reaction to ibuprofen, aspirin (Link: www.nhs.uk/medicines/aspirin/) or another non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) (Link: www.nhs.uk/medicines/nsaids/)
- you have a stomach ulcer or you've had them before
- you have asthma or allergies (such as hay fever)
- you have chickenpox
- you have a heart, liver or kidney condition

- you have problems with blood clotting
- you've had a stroke
- you're pregnant or trying to get pregnant

Check the packet or leaflet that comes with your medicine to see if it's suitable for you. Speak to a pharmacist or doctor if you're not sure if you can use it.

Breastfeeding and ibuprofen

If you're breastfeeding, check with a pharmacist or doctor before using ibuprofen.

Paracetamol (Link: www.nhs.uk/medicines/paracetamol-for-adults/) is usually the best painkiller to take if you're breastfeeding, but ibuprofen can often be used if needed.

If you use the gel or spray, use it on the smallest area of skin you need to and try to avoid your baby's skin touching the area where you applied it, if you can.

It's rare for breastfed babies to get any side effects from medicine you're taking, but speak to a healthcare professional if you have any concerns about your baby.

Pregnancy and ibuprofen

You should avoid using ibuprofen during pregnancy unless you're advised to by a doctor or pharmacist.

Paracetamol is usually the best painkiller to take if you're pregnant.

Find out more about taking ibuprofen during pregnancy on the Bumps (Best Use of Medicines in Pregnancy) website (Link: <https://www.medicinesinpregnancy.org/leaflets-a-z/ibuprofen/>)

Taking ibuprofen with other medicines, food and drink

There are some medicines, remedies and supplements that may not mix well with ibuprofen.

These include some types of:

- anticoagulants (Link: www.nhs.uk/medicines/anticoagulants/) (such as warfarin (Link: www.nhs.uk/medicines/warfarin/))
- steroid medicines (Link: www.nhs.uk/medicines/steroids/)
- antidepressants (Link: www.nhs.uk/medicines/antidepressants/)
- medicines to lower blood pressure

Check the packet or leaflet that comes with your medicine to see if it's suitable for you. Speak to a pharmacist or doctor if you're not sure if you can take it.

Taking ibuprofen with other painkillers

Adults can take ibuprofen at the same time as paracetamol if needed, but it's a good idea to try them on their own first to see if they relieve your pain.

Do not take ibuprofen at the same time as other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), such as naproxen or aspirin. This can increase the risk of serious side effects like stomach ulcers.

Food, drink and alcohol with ibuprofen

You can eat and drink normally while taking ibuprofen, but try to avoid drinking a lot of alcohol because this can increase the risk of side effects.

Find out more about your medicine

To find out more about your medicine, you can:

- check the leaflet that comes with it
- search for your medicine leaflet on the electronic medicines compendium website (Link: <https://www.medicines.org.uk/emc/browse-medicines>)
- speak to a pharmacist for advice

Page last reviewed: 27 August 2025

Next review due: 27 August 2028