



# Gut Check: Know Your Medicine

It is estimated that more than 100,000 people are hospitalized and 17,000 die every year from gastrointestinal bleeding and liver damage due to overdose or overuse of over-the-counter (OTC) pain medicine ingredients.<sup>1</sup> Gastroenterologists care for these patients and want adults to know how to safely use their medicine.

**In most cases, the simple act of reading and following medicine labels can help to prevent this serious harm.**

To help adults carefully navigate their and their loved ones' medicine use, the American Gastroenterological Association (AGA) launched *Gut Check: Know Your Medicine*. This new campaign focuses on the importance of safely using OTC pain medicine and knowing the active ingredients and dosage limits.

Through this campaign, AGA seeks to reduce the amount of preventable health issues that thousands of individuals face each year.

When used correctly, OTC pain medicines can help relieve pain and reduce fever. Thousands of generic and brand name products are available at pharmacies, drug stores and local retailers. While their names may differ, many share the same active ingredients, such as:

aspirin



acetaminophen



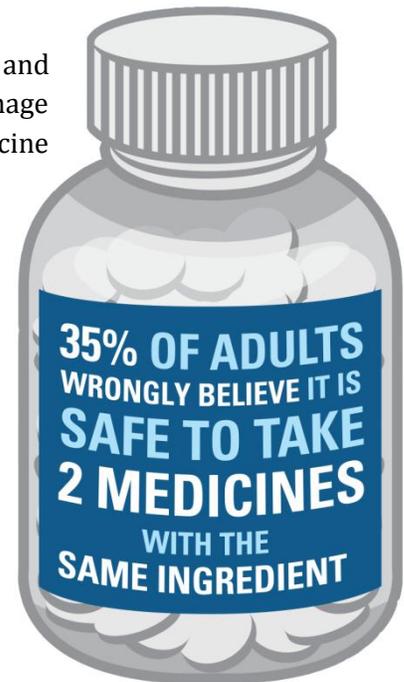
ibuprofen



naproxen sodium

These ingredients are generally safe when taken at their recommended dose, but can become dangerous if overused or taken at higher-than-recommended doses.

The *Gut Check: Know Your Medicine* campaign focuses on the need for adults to read and follow their medicine labels and recognize whether their prescription or OTC pain, cold and cough, or sleep product contains the same ingredient. Paramount to this understanding are package labels, which help adults understand what — if any — medicines share ingredients.



**It is important not to take more than one medicine at the same time with the same active ingredient; doing so can put you at risk of an overdose and could cause harm.**

The campaign focuses on the millions of aging Americans who will face new health concerns and challenges — and who will experience more frequent joint and muscle pain.

To relieve their pain, many adults may turn to OTC medicines alone or in combination with prescription pain products. Without the proper label education, adults will likely not know their risks or the appropriate steps to take to avoid harmful side effects.

With educational resources and a compelling online video, *Gut Check: Know Your Medicine* empowers adults to actively learn about their OTC medicines. By knowing ingredients, dosing instructions, and warnings, individuals can play an important role in protecting their and their family's health.

Most importantly, AGA encourages individuals to talk with their doctor, nurse practitioner, physician's assistant or pharmacist with any questions they have about their OTC pain reliever, including questions about dose, ingredients and whether alternative options could be considered.

**Did you know that more than 500 prescription and OTC medicines contain acetaminophen in the U.S., and nearly 550 different NSAIDs?**

**Acetaminophen**

is found in more than

**500**

**NSAIDs**

are found in more than

**550**

## To use OTC pain relievers safely:

1

### Read the Label

Read and follow ALL your medicine labels and do not exceed dosing guidelines.

2

### One Product at a Time

ONLY TAKE ONE product at a time that contains acetaminophen or an NSAID.

3

### Talk to a Professional

Talk with your doctor or pharmacist about your medicine use and other options for managing your pain.

Visit *Gut Check: Know Your Medicine* online at [gutcheck.gastro.org](http://gutcheck.gastro.org).

<sup>1</sup>Singh Gurkirpal, MD. "Recent Considerations in Nonsteroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drug Gastropathy." *The American Journal of Medicine*. July 27, 1998, p. 31S.

U.S. Food and Drug Administration. (2009). [Acetaminophen Overdose and Liver Injury — Background and Options for Reducing Injury](#).

