



health

Department:
Health
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

SAHPRA
South African
Health Products
Regulatory Authority

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Medicines safety communication
Public warning on the safe use of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs)

The South African Health Products Regulatory Authority (SAHPRA) cautions consumers about the risk of adverse effects when using non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs).

NSAIDs are a group of medicines used for their pain-relieving and fever-reducing effects. They are available both over-the-counter (OTC) and on prescription upon consultation with a doctor. They are available both as single medicines and in combination with other medicines. NSAIDs include aspirin, ibuprofen, diclofenac, indomethacin, ketorolac, sulindac, lornoxicam, meloxicam, piroxicam, tenoxicam, naproxen, mefenamic acid, celecoxib, rofecoxib, parecoxib, and valdecoxib.

While considered safe when taken as directed, NSAIDs can cause stomach bleeding, may reduce kidney function, and may occasionally lead to a heart attack or stroke. These risks are higher with higher doses and/or longer than recommended period of use of NSAIDs and in patients who have pre-existing stomach problems, or have heart or kidney diseases. If you take low-dose aspirin for protection against heart attack and stroke, be advised that some NSAIDs can interfere with that protective effect. If you have heart disease or high blood pressure, consult a healthcare provider before using an NSAID. Please inform your healthcare provider of any existing heart condition or known kidney problems or pre-existing stomach condition when seeking treatment.

Prescription NSAIDs are an important treatment for the symptoms of many debilitating conditions, including osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, gout and other rheumatological and painful conditions. Over-the-counter NSAIDs are used to temporarily reduce fever and to treat minor aches and pains such as headaches, toothaches, backaches, muscular aches, tendonitis and strains.

Consumers are urged to read the patient information leaflet for both over-the-counter and prescription medicines, as it provides important safety information. SAHPRA advises consumers to seek medical help if they experience stomach bleeding or symptoms that might signal heart problems or stroke, such as chest pain, trouble breathing, sudden weakness in one part or side of the body or sudden slurred speech while on NSAIDs.

Health professionals in South Africa are urged to report any adverse reactions to the National Adverse Drug Event Monitoring Centre at (021) 4471618 or SAHPRA pharmacovigilance office on (012) 395 9133 or using the reporting form at http://www.mccza.com/documents/14ed44a46.04_ARF1_Jul16_v4.pdf and e-mailing it to adr@health.gov.za

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