



KARYN SHANKS MD

Heart, Hope, Healing

Ibuprofen: Friend or Foe? Learn the facts about this dangerous drug.

BY KARYN SHANKS MD | OCTOBER 7, 2018



Ever checked out the pain reliever aisle at the grocery store? Seen the many shelves of Ibuprofen bottles lined up in all shapes and sizes? Labels promising to relieve practically everything that ails you?

Ibuprofen, part of a family of pain-relieving drugs known as “non-steroidal anti-inflammatory” drugs (NSAIDs), is the staple go-to pain and inflammation remedy in most American households, and recommended frequently by most physicians.

Sooo... must be good for us, right?

Here’s the scoop: Ibuprofen works really, really well. *At what it does.*

Which is to turn off the inflammation response at key points in our body’s chemistry (for the physiology geeks out there, think cyclooxygenase, prostaglandins, prostacyclin, and nitric oxide—all necessary for regulating inflammation and blood flow into tissues).

What happens when we take it? We feel better. Our fever goes away. Our joints hurt less. Sounds good, huh?

Problem is—there's a great big cost.

It should come as no surprise that in the body's great wisdom, inflammation has a purpose. That shutting down inflammation may relieve our pain, swelling, and fever, but leads to other problems.

How?

- Inflammation may hurt, but it helps us heal.
- Shutting down inflammation does not address the root cause—*why* are we inflamed in the first place?
- Downstream effects of shutting down inflammation leads to other problems:
 - Increased gut permeability.
 - Gut lining erosions.
 - Gastrointestinal pain.
 - Impaired blood flow regulation to the heart and kidneys.
 - Delayed healing of chronically injured tissue.
- And all NSAIDS can cause disasters: heart attack, kidney failure, gastrointestinal bleeding.

So what do we do when we hurt?

For severe, acute inflammation-related pain or fever, do the humane thing: use Ibuprofen or other NSAID your trusted doctor recommends (unless you are known to be severely intolerant). Follow manufacture's instructions and limit yourself to just a few doses on rare occasions.

For persistent inflammatory pain, fever, or swelling work with someone who knows how to help you without the use of dangerous drugs. Find a Functional Medicine (FM) practitioner to help you get to—and *resolve*—the root causes of your symptoms.

Use safe plant and food-based anti-inflammatory strategies:

- Omega-3 fats from wild-caught fatty fish or high quality supplements.
- Turmeric extract—curcumin.
- Ginger—fresh or powdered.
- Boswellia.
- Omit common food triggers of inflammation:

- Gluten-containing grains
- All grains for the highly sensitive
- Animal milk products
- Eggs
- Night shade vegetables (white potato, eggplant, sweet and hot peppers, tomatoes)

Get to the root cause.

Your FM practitioner will also work closely with you to heal your gut (often the genesis of systemic inflammatory and autoimmune conditions) and address potential triggers for the inflammation you are experiencing.

Work closely with your doctor to get rid of all NSAIDS and get to the root cause of your pain and inflammation.

p.s. Want to join like minded seekers of optimal health and wellness through the power of food? Join our exclusive Facebook group, [***Grit and Grace***](#), for our inaugural [***Reclaim Your Light Through the Power of Food—a Thirty Day Challenge***](#). Pre-launch food plans and support available now. Challenge begins October 15th. Hope to see you there!

p.p.s. See my previous articles for more detail on the subject of inflammation:

[**Inflammation: Beauty, Not the Beast.**](#) 2017.

[**Wise Use of Supplements for Inflammation.**](#) 2016.

I've written extensively about inflammation and autoimmunity as it relates to autoimmune hypothyroidism:

[**Hypothyroidism—Part One: Just the Smoke.**](#) 2017.

[**Hypothyroidism—Part Two: How to Diagnose Hypothyroid-Autoimmune Syndrome.**](#) 2017.

[**Hypothyroidism—Part Three: How to Put Out the Fire.**](#) 2017.

Resources:

The Institute for Functional Medicine: [**Find a Practitioner.**](#)

Liudmila L. Mazaleuskaya, et al. [**PharmGKB summary: ibuprofen pathways.**](#) 2015.

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Karyn Shanks, MD, is a physician who lives and practices in Iowa City. Her work is inspired by the science of Functional Medicine, body-mind principles, and wisdom gleaned from the transformational journeys of thousands of clients over her twenty-five-year career. Her work honors each individual and the power of their stories, their inner wisdom, and innate healing potential. She believes that the bones of healing are in what we do for ourselves. She is the author of *Liftoff*, a manual of energy recovery and healing through essential self-care practices.

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