

There are two classes of commonly used medications for arthritis and joint pain that you can purchase at your local pharmacy or store. Each of these medications has different dosing instructions and it is important that you read the package.

Acetaminophen: Tylenol, non-aspirin pain reliever

This medication is a great pain reliever and is not likely to cause stomach upset or ulcers. It can be found in combination with narcotic pain relievers, such as Percocet, Vicodin, or Darvocet. It is best to check your prescription bottles to ensure that you are not taking too much acetaminophen. This medication can also be taken with any of the medications from the second class below (NSAIDs).

Acetaminophen, if taken in large quantities can affect the liver. The maximum dose for any person is 4000 mg per day and patients with kidney or liver problems should limit their total dose even further. Please ask your primary care physician. Acetaminophen comes in different strengths, so check the label on your bottle.

Maximum Dosing

Pill Strength	Amount of medication in each pill	Usual Dose	Maximum # of pills daily *
Regular strength	325 mg	1-2 pills every 6 hours	12
Extra strength	500 mg	1-2 pills every 6 hours	8

* in an otherwise healthy adult

Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory (NSAID)

This class of medication breaks down further into three groups of non-prescription NSAIDs each with different qualities. It is generally not advisable to take more than one group of medication at a time.

- Aspirin: available in 81 mg and 325 mg pills
 Healthy patients, without bleeding problems, can take up to 650 mg every four hours. The "enteric" coated brands are less likely to cause stomach upset or heartburn.
- Ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin): 200 mg in each pill
 Healthy patients may take up to four pills three times a day. No more than 12 pills in one day.
- Naproxen (Aleve, Naprosyn): 220 mg in each pill
 Healthy patients may take up to two pills twice daily, no more than four pills in one day.

The NSAID medications can cause stomach upset, heartburn, ulcers or intestinal bleeding in some patients. It is a good idea to take these medications with food. Patients with kidney or liver problems should follow the instructions of their primary care physician when taking these medications. All patients should communicate with their primary care physician when taking NSAIDs on a regular basis.