

> OTC Analgesia Checklist

Contributor:
Christopher M. Chappel, MD
Medical Director, Chappel Group
Kissimmee, FL

Comorbidities and concomitant medications are important considerations in pain management. Every year in the United States, millions of adults are treated for conditions such as hypertension, high cholesterol, ulcers, and diabetes.¹ Further, over 90% of US households purchase over-the-counter (OTC) medicines each year.² When recommending an OTC analgesic, your patient's individual concomitant medications and comorbidities, as well as specific analgesia needs, should be taken into account.

The following checklist is designed to assist you in identifying patients for whom certain OTC analgesics may not be the most appropriate choice. There may be other considerations that could factor into your recommendation.

Does your patient ...

- have an increased risk of gastrointestinal bleeding?
 - have gastroesophageal reflux disease, dyspepsia, or peptic ulceration or a history of stomach problems?
 - have kidney disease?
 - have cardiovascular disease or a history of stroke?
 - have hypertension?
 - take aspirin to protect against heart attack or stroke?
 - have liver cirrhosis?
 - have asthma?
 - have edema (due to congestive heart failure)?
 - drink 3 or more alcoholic beverages every day?
 - take prescription medications, such as NSAIDs, antihypertensive agents, diuretics, or anticoagulants?
 - take OTC medications containing NSAIDs, including cough and cold or allergy products, sleep aids, antipyretics, and analgesics?
 - take steroids or have a condition that requires long-term steroid use?
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- Is your patient 60 years or older?
 - Has your patient ever had an allergic reaction or serious side effects from taking pain relievers?
 - Has your patient recently had heart surgery or is he/she about to have heart surgery?

▶ If you checked any of these boxes, weigh the benefits and risks before recommending an OTC NSAID (ibuprofen, naproxen sodium) to this patient. Alternative analgesics may be more appropriate and should be considered.

Does your patient ...

- drink 3 or more alcoholic beverages every day?
- have liver disease?
- take warfarin?
- take prescription medications containing acetaminophen, including acetaminophen-containing opioids?
- take other OTC medications containing acetaminophen, including cough and cold or allergy products, sleep aids, antipyretics, and analgesics?
- have an allergy to acetaminophen?

▶ If you checked any of these boxes, weigh the benefits and risks before recommending OTC acetaminophen to this patient. Alternative analgesics may be more appropriate and should be considered.

OTC analgesics are safe when used as directed; however, as with any medication, they do pose risks. It is therefore important to weigh the benefits and risks for each patient before recommending an OTC analgesic. Providing patient education on the safe use of OTC analgesics, including information on potential adverse events, drug interactions, and appropriate dosing, can also help avoid or minimize risks.

References

1. Aitken M, Kleinrock M. *Declining Medicine Use and Costs: For Better or Worse? A Review of the Use of Medicines in the United States in 2012*. Parsippany, NJ: IMS Institute for Healthcare Informatics; May 2013. 2. Nielsen Household Panel Data, 2014.

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