



**Medical  
Blueprints**

## ***POPPING A PAIN PILL: BAD FOR YOUR BACK? REPORT #2991***

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**BACKGROUND:** Back pain is the single leading cause of disability worldwide. It prevents many people from engaging in work as well as other everyday activities. One-half of all working Americans admit to having back pain symptoms each year, and it accounts for more than 264 million lost workdays. Back pain can affect people of all ages and is the third most common reason for visits to the doctor's office, behind skin disorders and osteoarthritis, or joint disorders. Most people with low back pain recover, however recurrence is common and for a small percentage of people, the condition will become chronic and disabling. While sports injuries or accidents can cause back pain, sometimes the simplest of movements like picking up a pencil can have painful results. In addition, arthritis, poor posture, obesity, and psychological stress can cause or complicate back pain, as well as the result from disease of internal organs, such as kidney stones, kidney infections, blood clots, or bone loss.

(Source: <https://handsdownbetter.org/health-and-wellness/back-pain-facts-and-statistics/>)

**RISKS OF OTC MEDICINE:** In most cases, over the counter (OTC) medicines are quite safe when they are used as directed. However, they can still have significant risks. NSAIDs sometimes cause bleeding in the stomach and digestive tract. You should consult your doctor to find out what food to eat before taking certain pain relievers such as NSAIDs. This is to reduce the risk for stomach problems, especially if you take these medicines for a longer period. One of the most serious problems with OTC pain relievers is taking too much of them at any one time. If you take too much acetaminophen, it can cause serious liver damage and even death. Acetaminophen is the leading cause of acute liver failure in the U.S. Overuse of NSAIDs can cause kidney disease and kidney failure. This is why it's important to carefully read the labels of all the medicines you take. Pain relievers can react harmfully with other medicines, especially blood thinners. You should always consult your doctor if you take any prescription medicines to confirm what OTC pain relievers should be avoided. Also, some OTC pain relievers can make certain health conditions worse.

(Source: <https://www.uhhospitals.org/health-information/health-and-wellness-library/article/adult-diseases-and-conditions-v1/otc-pain-medications-and-their-risks>)

**STUDY FINDS KEY TO HEALING:** A study conducted by researchers at McGill University in Canada, and scientists from Italy, suggests that blocking inflammation after injury might make that pain chronic. This research challenges the standard approach to treating pain. Researchers found that neutrophils, a type of white blood cell that helps the body fight infection and dominates the early stages of inflammation, plays a key role in resolving pain. Jeffrey Mogil, researcher of the study and professor of psychology at McGill University, says, "We think that chronic pain develops because of inflammation so we think inflammation is bad and we should stop it. But what this study suggests is that yes, but at the cost of increasing your chances to develop chronic pain." The study was conducted by nearly two dozen researchers who examined pain in three phases, using human blood cells and mice trials. By comparing blood samples between patients who had their pain resolved and those who didn't, scientists found that people whose pain went away had experienced a lot of inflammation driven by neutrophils. Several pain experts that are not affiliated with the study say it suggests a new way to look at how the body heals.

(Source: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/health/mcgill-university-inflammation-chronic-pain-study-1.6458382>)

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