

COVID-19: COVID-19 and ibuprofen use

March 21, 2020

The COVID-19 pandemic is evolving rapidly. This guidance is subject to change. Please visit the Middlesex-London Health Unit website (www.healthunit.com) regularly for updates and additional guidance.

Key Points

- **The WHO does not recommend against the use of ibuprofen.**
- There is no evidence to suggest that using ibuprofen to manage symptoms of COVID-19 will worsen the condition.
- People who have been taking ibuprofen to manage conditions such as cardiovascular disease, rheumatoid arthritis, or other chronic pain, **should not stop** their taking ibuprofen without first speaking to their primary care physician
- People can take acetaminophen to treat the fever and pain, unless they have been told by their doctor that it is not suitable for them.

Background

- There has been conflicting information regarding the safety of ibuprofen use in people with COVID-19. Ibuprofen is a popular over-the-counter non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID), used to treat pain and fever, commonly sold under the name “Advil” or “Motrin”.
- On March 14, 2020, the French Minister of Health, Olivier Véran, tweeted that anti-inflammatory drugs such as ibuprofen could lead to serious side effects in people with COVID-19.
- Leading groups of physicians and scientists, including the European Medicines Agency, objected by stating that there was “no scientific evidence establishing a link between ibuprofen and worsening of COVID-19.”
- On March 17, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) recommended against using ibuprofen in patients with COVID-19. Other organizations, such as NHS UK had followed this precautionary advice.
- On March 18, 2020, the WHO **redacted their original statement**, and stated that they **do not recommend against using ibuprofen in COVID-19**. They stated that they “are not aware of reports of any negative effects of ibuprofen, beyond the usual known side effects.”
- To date, there is no guidance against using ibuprofen in patients with COVID-19.
- People who have been taking ibuprofen to manage conditions such as cardiovascular disease, rheumatoid arthritis, or other chronic pain, should not stop their taking ibuprofen without first speaking to their primary care physician.
- The Middlesex-London Health Unit recognizes that new recommendations for COVID-19 is constantly changing. Continue to follow the newest available guidelines at <http://www.healthunit.com> and <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>.