



Ibuprofen?

Introduction

In this short discussion activity students look at a patient information leaflet on Ibuprofen, a widely used painkiller, and discuss answers to questions about it. It is intended as an introduction to the topic of medicines, to raise issues of effectiveness and side effects. The importance of research, to make sure a drug is both effective and adequately safe, is raised. It may also encourage students to make use of such information in their own health care.

References

Specification 3.1.4.

Patient information leaflets can be found at <http://emc.medicines.org.uk>

The activity

A shortened patient information leaflet is provided drawn from published leaflets. The activity could also be run using genuine leaflets. It is intended as a discussion activity, stimulated by the leaflet and questions.

Suggested answers to questions

4. Would Ibuprofen be likely to be a safe and effective medicine for relieving:
 - a) headache? *yes*
 - b) influenza fever? *yes*
 - c) stomach pains? *no, the information suggests that it is likely to irritate the digestive system*
5. What is the maximum dose recommended over 24 hours?
1200mg
6. What should you do if Ibuprofen gives you mild diarrhoea or makes you slightly dizzy?
nothing, these are common side effects which will stop when you stop taking the medicine
7. What should you do if you have difficulty breathing after taking Ibuprofen?
stop taking the medicine and seek medical help if the symptoms are serious
8. Why do many people choose to take the risk of side effects from Ibuprofen?
because the benefits of pain relief outweigh the slight risks
9. When choosing the recommended dose manufacturers have to consider the two factors of effectiveness and safety.
 - a) What would happen if this dose was too low? *no effect on pain*
 - b) What would happen if this dose was too high? *more side effects*
10. Suggest one type of research that might have been carried out to get each of the following sorts of information in this leaflet;
 - a) The way Ibuprofen acts in the body - *laboratory work on cells or animals*

- b) The effective dose - *trial different doses in a large number of people*
- c) The possible side effects - *tests on healthy people*
 - *watch for side effects in trials*
 - *a reporting system once the drug is in widespread use*

You will learn more about all these types of research during this topic.

11. Name two other pain killers you might use in the same way as Ibuprofen. Do you know what risks they have?
- Aspirin – risk of stomach bleeding*
 - Paracetamol – liver damage*
12. Recently Prexige, a pain killer for arthritis, has been withdrawn from sale after two years of use because of the risks of serious liver damage. Why do you think it took 2 years for this side effect to be discovered?
- Rare side effects only show when large numbers of people take the drug*

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Introduction

Many of you will have taken Ibuprofen for pain relief. You may also know it under a brand name, such as Nurofen. Ibuprofen is available without prescription because it is very safe. But no medicine is without risks. In this activity you will look at information on this common painkiller.

The activity

Read the patient information leaflet. In discussion with a partner answer the following questions

1. Have you taken a painkiller in the last month?
2. Did you read the patient information leaflet? If not, why not?
3. Should you read the patient information leaflet?
4. Would Ibuprofen be likely to be a safe and effective medicine for relieving:
 - a) headache?
 - b) influenza fever?
 - c) stomach pains?
5. What is the maximum dose recommended over 24 hours?
6. What should you do if Ibuprofen gives you mild diarrhoea or makes you slightly dizzy?
7. What should you do if you have difficulty breathing after taking Ibuprofen ?
8. Why do many people choose to take the risk of side effects from Ibuprofen?
9. When choosing the recommended dose manufacturers have to consider the two factors of effectiveness and safety.
 - a) What would happen if the recommended dose was too low?
 - b) What would happen if the recommended dose was too high?
10. Suggest one type of research that might have been carried out to get each of the following sorts of information in this leaflet;
 - a) The way Ibuprofen acts in the body
 - b) The effective dose
 - c) The possible side effects

You will learn more about all these types of research during this topic.

11. Name two other pain killers you might use in the same way as Ibuprofen. What risks do they have?
12. Recently Prexige, a pain killer for arthritis, has been withdrawn from sale after two years of use because of the risks of serious liver damage. Why do you think it took 2 years for this side effect to be discovered?

Extension work at home

13. Find out about the possible side effects of two medicines kept in your home. In what percentage of people are these side effects expected to occur?

Patient information leaflet for Ibuprofen - 400mg tablets

What is it for?

Ibuprofen is one of a class of drugs called non-steroid anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDS) . It works by reducing the ability of the body to produce substances known as prostoglandins. Some prostoglandins cause pain and inflammation. Ibuprofen also lowers a high body temperature.

It can be used to relieve the pain and inflammation in osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, tendinitis or low back pain. It can also be used to treat other painful conditions such as toothache, period pain and headache including migraine.

Do not take Ibuprofen if

- You are allergic to aspirin or any other pain killers
- You have ever had a stomach ulcer
- You have heart failure, liver or kidney disease
- You are more than 5 months pregnant

Consult your doctor before taking Ibuprofen if

- You have asthma
- You have had ulcerative colitis or Crohn's disease
- You have high blood pressure

How to take Ibuprofen

Take one 400mg tablet not more than three times a day.

Take the tablet with a glass of water. It is recommended to be taken with food to reduce the possibility of stomach upset.

Possible side effects

Mild but very common side effects are indigestion or diarrhoea (1 in 10 patients)

Common side effects include nausea, vomiting, skin rash, tiredness, dizziness (between 1 and 10% of patients)

If any of the following occur stop taking the tablets and seek medical help:

- Vomiting blood
- Allergic reaction such as skin rash, swelling of the face or difficulty breathing
- Severe or persistent headache
- A yellow colouration of the skin

The information above is a selection from guidance given by different manufacturers and is as factually correct as we can make it. However it is provided for teaching purposes only. You should not use it to make decisions on treatment.