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Reader's Digest

14 Pain Medications Doctors Try to Avoid

By Dawn Yankek

Prolonged use of certain pain medications may lead to serious side effects or addiction. Doctors vary in their advice, but here are the ones pain specialists avoid—for themselves and their patients.

Aspirin and Advil



“I personally would never take any medication in the nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) family—particularly aspirin or Advil. I have suffered from irritable bowel syndrome in the past, and NSAIDs have been closely linked with the development of intestinal permeability (leaky gut). Being that I am also a relatively young male still looking to have more children in the future, I have extra reason to stay away from Advil, as it has been shown to decrease sperm count and testosterone levels at higher doses. This class of over-the-counter medication is extremely common globally, and it may be the right choice for many people; I just caution those with digestive or reproductive issues to stay away. My alternative is a daily high-dose fish oil. At doses of 2–3 grams a day, fish oil has strong anti-inflammatory



properties and has the added benefits of reducing pain, improving your cholesterol numbers, and potentially lowering your risk of heart disease.” —Elroy Vojdani, MD, IFMCP, functional medicine practitioner.

Ambien and Lunesta



“Patients with chronic pain often experience significant difficulty falling or staying asleep. Some estimate this overlap to occur in 60 to 80 percent of pain patients. Therefore, sleep medication is commonly prescribed. But I would never take—and I never prescribe—prescription sleep medication like Ambien or Lunesta. These medications have been linked to a higher risk of Alzheimer’s disease. My alternative is using high-dose magnesium threonate, up to 1 gram, to help induce restful sleep before bed. This form of magnesium also has the added benefit of improving brain health and function in the long run and can even mildly boost mood. If my patients need some extra help with sleep, I will prescribe 200–400 mg of theanine, a calming amino acid that can help reduce anxiety and induce restful sleep when taken right before bedtime.” —Dr. Vojdani. Here are 20 things you do before bed that sabotage your sleep.

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