Study: Painkillers May Increase Risk of Heart Attack

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Common household anti-inflammatory meds may be doing more harm than good by actually increasing people's risk of heart attack, stroke and even death, according to a study published in the British Medical Journal (BMJ) and reported by HealthDay News.

Painkillers such as Aleve, Advil and Motrin, classified as non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), are often taken for pain and inflammation relief, but research suggests that doctors should consider cardiovascular risk before prescribing them to patients.

For the study, Swiss researchers analyzed 31 trials involving more than 116,000 patients who took NSAIDs from among those listed here: naproxen (Aleve), ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), diclofenac (Voltaren, Cataflam), celecoxib (Celebrex), etoricoxib (Arcoxia), rofecoxib (Vioxx), lumiracoxib (Prexige) or a placebo.

Although the overall number of patients who experienced heart events was low, scientists noted that compared with those who took the placebo, people taking rofecoxib had twice the risk of heart attack. Those who took lumiracoxib had three times the risk of stroke. And patients who took etoricoxib and diclofenac had the highest risk of cardiac death.

"Although uncertainty remains, little evidence exists to suggest that any of the investigated drugs are safe in cardiovascular terms," researchers said.

While some doctors argued that this study can't explain a link between taking NSAIDs and cardiovascular risk and doesn't take into account population characteristics or drug dosages, they agreed that the research did generate important questions about painkillers.

Painkillers may not help you lower your risk of heart disease, but did you know chocolate can? Click here to learn more.

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