

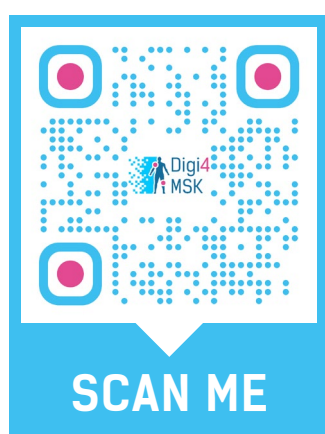
## 6. What is important to know about ibuprofen?

Rosa, 58, works as a school administrator. She has been living with knee pain for years and keeps a small box of ibuprofen in her handbag—just in case. Whenever the pain flares, she takes a pill, sometimes two, and gets through the day.

At first, it seemed like a perfect solution. The pain eased, she could walk comfortably, and she did not have to miss work. But lately, Rosa had begun to notice heartburn at night and a heavy feeling in her stomach. *"Maybe it's the stress"* she thought, brushing it off.

One afternoon, while picking up a new box at the pharmacy, the pharmacist asked, *"How often are you taking these?"* Rosa hesitated. *"Most days"* she admitted. The pharmacist explained gently that while ibuprofen helps relieve pain and inflammation, taking it regularly or on an empty stomach can irritate the stomach lining and affect blood pressure or kidneys—especially when combined with other medicines.

Rosa listened quietly, realizing she had never mentioned her daily pills to her doctor. She always assumed that, because ibuprofen was sold without a prescription, it was completely safe. That evening, she looked at the half-empty blister pack and wondered how much she really knew about what she was taking.



### Skills you can build by watching the video:

- Understanding how ibuprofen works and when it is appropriate to use it.
- Recognizing possible side effects and interactions with other medications.
- Learning how pharmacists and doctors can help you use pain medication safely and effectively.

**YouTube link:** <https://youtu.be/OY1Kkz9RNKE>

## 6.1. How does ibuprofen work?

Ibuprofen is a medicine that helps reduce pain, inflammation and fever. It works by blocking substances in the body called prostaglandins, which cause swelling, redness and pain, when you are injured or sick.

It has typically been used in short-term conditions such as sprains, infections or occasional headaches. However, it is not the best choice for managing long-term pain, as prolonged use can have side effects.

## 6.2. What are the possible side effects of ibuprofen?

Some of the most common side effects include:

1. Stomach irritation, which can cause pain, heartburn or, in severe cases, ulcers.
2. Kidney problems, especially in people who already have kidney disease.
3. Increased blood pressure, which puts additional stress on your heart and blood vessels.
4. Cardiovascular risks, as it may increase the likelihood of severe problems in the heart or brain.

## 6.3. How to use ibuprofen safely?

To stay safe using ibuprofen, follow these tips:

1. Keep in mind the dosage. Take the smallest amount that works to relieve your pain.
2. Do not use it for a long time. If you need it for more than a few days, ask your doctor.
3. Take it with food. This helps protect your stomach.
4. Do not mix it with alcohol or other anti-inflammatory drugs. Combining them can increase side effects.
5. Pay attention to how the medication interacts with others. If you take other medication, check with a doctor to avoid problems.

## 6.4. When to seek medical advice?

Although you can buy ibuprofen without a prescription, you should consult your doctor for other options if:

1. You have stomach ulcers, kidney disease or heart problems.
2. You are taking blood thinners or other medicines that may interact with anti-inflammatory drugs.
3. You have had persistent side effects such as stomach pain, black stools, or shortness of breath.



### Takeaway messages:

Ibuprofen can be useful when used correctly, but there are risks to be aware of. Just because it is available without a prescription does not mean it is harmless. Always read the label, stick to the recommended doses and, if you are not sure, ask a doctor!