

# What YOU Should Know About Your Pet's Pain Medication



## What are NSAIDs?

Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, NSAIDs, are prescribed as pain, inflammation and fever relievers. NSAIDs are most commonly used for the symptomatic relief of arthritic pain in geriatric pets. Aspirin and ibuprofen are well-recognized human NSAIDs. The Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) Center for Veterinary Medicine (CVM) has approved specific NSAIDs for use in pets with osteoarthritis. Ask your veterinarian which pain reliever is right for your pet.

## What are the benefits of NSAIDs?

A decade ago, few drugs were available to treat pets in pain. Today, veterinarian-prescribed NSAIDs offer relief to pets, helping control symptoms such as, inflammation, swelling, stiffness and joint pain. In addition to providing pain control, veterinarians also believe that NSAIDs help pets heal better and faster.

**Consistent, open communication with your veterinarian and close monitoring of your pet can make NSAIDs a beneficial and cost-effective treatment option.**



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The American Animal Hospital Association is an international organization of 6,000 companion animal veterinary care teams, comprised of more than 36,000 veterinary professionals. Established in 1933, AAHA is the only organization that accredits veterinary practices throughout the U.S. and Canada for dedication to high standards of veterinary care. More than 3,000 AAHA-accredited practices pass regular reviews of AAHA's stringent accreditation process that covers patient care, client service and medical protocols. For pet care information or referral to an AAHA practice, visit [www.healthypet.com](http://www.healthypet.com).

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## Are NSAIDs safe?

The FDA considers NSAIDs to be "safe and effective when used according to the label and when pet owners are informed about common NSAID adverse reactions." According to the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), the NSAIDs available today are much safer than they have ever been in the past and cause far fewer side effects. The FDA also notes that "duration of use makes a difference in the safety" of NSAIDs as the risk of side effects can increase the longer a pet is given an NSAID.

## What are the side effects of NSAIDs?

The following is a list of side effects, some more common than others, to watch for while giving NSAIDs to your pet:

- Change in appetite
- Vomiting
- Change in bowel movements, such as diarrhea or black, tarry, or bloody stools
- Change in behavior, such as activity levels, aggression or lack of coordination
- Seizures
- Yellowing of gums, skin or whites of the eyes (jaundice)
- Change in drinking habits — frequency or amount consumed
- Change in urination habits — frequency, color or smell
- Change in skin — redness, scabs or scratching
- Lethargy and/or depression

More serious side effects include gastrointestinal bleeding, ulcers, perforations, and in rare cases, kidney and liver damage, and death.

## What should you do before your pet uses NSAIDs?

Ask your veterinarian about the benefits, risks and side effects of any medication, including NSAIDs. An informed pet owner is the best defense against serious side effects from NSAIDs.

Tell your veterinarian about your pet's symptoms and current medications, including prescriptions, over-the-counter drugs, vitamins, herbal supplements and flea control products. Giving NSAIDs in combination with any other medications/ supplements could seriously harm your pet.

All pets should receive thorough history and physical examinations, as well as appropriate blood and urine testing, before initiation of NSAID therapy. Ask your veterinarian about the testing protocols that are best for your pet.

For more information from the FDA, visit [http://www.fda.gov/fdac/features/2006/506\\_nsaid.html](http://www.fda.gov/fdac/features/2006/506_nsaid.html)

## What should you do while your pet is using NSAIDs?

Drugs used to control pain in pets, such as NSAIDs, should be given only when necessary and in the smallest effective dose. If your pet's condition seems to improve, you should discuss continued use of NSAIDs with your veterinarian.

Never give NSAIDs to a pet or increase the dose or frequency without your veterinarian's instructions. Because each pet responds to NSAIDs differently, no one medication is considered more effective or safe than another.

Blood and urine testing should be performed on a regular basis during the use of NSAIDs.

Watch for any NSAIDs side effects in your pet. If you suspect an adverse reaction, stop the use of the drug and contact your veterinarian immediately.