

Medicines for Children: information for parents and carers

Ibuprofen for pain and inflammation



This leaflet is about the use of ibuprofen that has been prescribed to reduce mild-to-moderate pain and inflammation. This might be after an injury, or due to a long-term condition such as juvenile arthritis.

This leaflet has been written specifically for parents and carers about the use of this medicine in children. The information may differ from that provided by the manufacturer. Please read this leaflet carefully. Keep it somewhere safe so that you can read it again.

If your child is allergic to other drugs for inflammation or has asthma, check with your doctor before giving this medicine.

Name of drug

Ibuprofen

Common brands: Brufen®, Nurofen®, Fenbid®, Calprofen®, Arthrofen®, Ebufac®, Motrin®, Rimafen®, Fenpaed®, Galprofen®, Orbifen®

Why is it important for my child to take this medicine?

Ibuprofen will help your child to feel less pain. It works best for inflammation and long-term pain when taken regularly for a few days.

What is ibuprofen available as?

- Tablets (200 mg, 400 mg, 600 mg)
- Sustained-release tablets (800 mg) (these will probably be labelled 'modified release', MR, SR or 'retard' on the packaging)
- Capsules (300 mg)
- Granules (600 mg per sachet) – these may not be suitable for children on a low-sodium diet
- Liquid sugar-free medicine (100 mg in 5 mL)

When should I give ibuprofen?


- Ibuprofen is usually given three or four times a day. Your doctor will tell you how often to give it.
- Wait at least 4 hours between doses.

How much should I give?

Your doctor will work out the amount of ibuprofen (the dose) that is right for *your* child. The dose will be shown on the medicine label.

It is important that you follow your doctor's instructions.

How should I give it?

 Ideally, give ibuprofen to your child after a meal or some food, as it is less likely to upset their stomach. Avoid giving it on an empty stomach.



Tablets and capsules should be swallowed with a glass of water, juice or similar. Your child should not chew the tablet or capsules.



Granules: Sprinkle or stir the granules into a small amount of soft food (e.g. yogurt) or a small drink. Your child should then swallow the food or drink straight away, without chewing. Make sure that they take it all.



Liquid medicine: Measure out the right amount using a medicine spoon or oral syringe. You can get these from your pharmacist. Do not use a kitchen teaspoon as it will not give the right amount.

When will the medicine start working?

- Your child should start to feel less pain 20–30 minutes after taking ibuprofen.
- Ibuprofen will have more effect against pain and inflammation when your child has been taking it regularly for a few days.
- To treat some types of long-term inflammation and pain, your child will need to take ibuprofen regularly for a few weeks for it to work properly.

What if my child is sick (vomits)?


- If your child is sick less than 30 minutes after having a dose of ibuprofen, give them the same dose again.
- If your child is sick more than 30 minutes after having a dose, you do not need to give them another dose. Wait until the next normal dose.


What if I forget to give it?

- If your child is in pain, give the missed dose as soon as you remember.
- You must then wait **at least 6 hours** before giving the next dose.

 Never give a 'double' dose of ibuprofen.

What if I give too much?

 If you think you may have given your child an extra dose of ibuprofen by mistake, wait **at least 12 hours** before giving another dose.


 If your child may have had more than a double dose of ibuprofen, or you are not sure, contact your doctor or NHS Direct (0845 4647) or take your child to hospital straight away.


- Take the medicine container or pack with you, even if it is empty. This will be useful to the doctor. Have the packet with you if you telephone for advice.
- If your child has heart, kidney or liver disease, you must be particularly careful not to give too much ibuprofen.

Are there any possible side-effects?

We use medicines to make our children better, but sometimes they cause effects that we don't want (side-effects).

Side-effects that you must do something about

 If your child develops a rash, swelling of the face, lips, tongue or throat, or has difficulty breathing or swallowing, contact your doctor or take your child to hospital straight away. They may be allergic to ibuprofen.

 If your child gets bad stomach pain, brings up (vomits) blood or their stools (poo) are very dark, contact your doctor straight away or take your child to hospital. They may have an ulcer.

Other side-effects you need to know about

- Ibuprofen may cause stomach pain, indigestion or heartburn, and your child may feel or be sick. You can help to reduce this by giving ibuprofen with food.
- If these symptoms carry on, or get worse, they may be signs of irritation to the stomach or oesophagus (food pipe). Contact your doctor if this happens.
- Your child may get diarrhoea.
- Your child may hear ringing in their ears, although this usually only occurs with high doses of ibuprofen.

Can other common medicines be given at the same time as ibuprofen?

- ⚠ Medicines that you can buy from the supermarket or pharmacy may contain ibuprofen (this information is given on the label). **Do not** give such medicines to your child if you have given them ibuprofen, as you risk giving them too much.
- Ibuprofen should not be taken with some common drugs that you get on prescription. It is important to tell your doctor *and* pharmacist that your child is taking ibuprofen.
- You can give your child medicines that contain paracetamol, unless your doctor has told you not to.
- Check with your doctor or pharmacist **before** giving any other medicines to your child. This includes herbal or complementary medicines.

Is there anything else I need to know about this medicine

- ⚠ Ibuprofen is one of a group of drugs called 'non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs' (NSAIDs). If your child has previously had a reaction to other drugs of this type, you should tell your doctor before starting ibuprofen.
- ⚠ Ibuprofen may make asthma worse in some children, but this is very rare.
- Occasionally ibuprofen can cause bleeding or a stomach ulcer when taken regularly for long periods of time. Give ibuprofen to your child with some food to help prevent this.

General advice

- If the ibuprofen does not seem to be helping your child's pain, contact your doctor for advice.
- Only give this medicine to *your* child. Never give it to anyone else, even if they seem to have the same condition, as you could do them harm.
- ⚠ If you think someone else may have taken some by accident, contact your doctor for advice.
- Try to give the medicine at about the same times each day, to help you remember. Write down the times that you give doses.
- Make sure that you always have enough medicine. Order a new prescription at least 2 weeks before you will run out.
- Make sure that the medicine is not older than the 'use by' date on the packaging. Give old medicines to your pharmacist to dispose of.

Where should I keep this medicine?

- Keep the medicine in a cupboard, away from heat and direct sunlight. It does not need to be kept in the fridge.
- Make sure that children cannot see or reach the medicine.
- Keep the medicine in the container it came in.

Who to contact for more information

Your child's doctor or pharmacist will be able to give you more information about ibuprofen and other medicines used to treat pain and inflammation.

You can also get more information from NHS Direct (0845 4647, www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk).

www.medicinesforchildren.org.uk



Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health

WellChild 
the national charity for sick children

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We have written this leaflet to help you understand more about the medicine you are giving to your child. We take great care to make sure that the information is correct and up-to-date. However, medicines can be used in different ways for different patients. It is therefore important that you follow the advice of your doctor or pharmacist, as they understand your child's illness. If you are not sure about something, ask your doctor or pharmacist. Note that this leaflet applies to the use of medicines in the UK; it may not apply in other countries. The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH), The Neonatal and Paediatric Pharmacists Group (NPPG), WellChild and the contributors and editors cannot be held responsible for the accuracy of information, omissions of information, or any actions that may be taken as a consequence of reading the leaflet.