



**Sports Creams, Pain Patches, & Braces:** Sports creams and pain patches do not help healing and instead simply block the sensation of pain. Braces apply local pressure to the painful area. However, they also do not help healing and do not effectively support the damaged area. Instead they diminish the sensation of pain. All of these treatments encourage increased use of the affected area and can therefore increase damage to the area.

**Ice:** There is no evidence that cooling an injured part helps it to heal. Icing an area decreases the blood flow to the area and decreases swelling. However, swelling is a normal part of the healing process. By decreasing swelling in the area, you may be slowing healing. Additionally, ice is a pain reliever. If the pain is severe, cold is probably a better and safer alternative to medications. When using ice, do not apply it directly to the skin as cold burns can result. In severe cases, ice can be useful, but for less severe strains and sprains, it is not necessary to use ice.

### [What To Use Instead of NSAIDS](#)

**Rest:** If something causes pain, it is a sign that you are doing damage to that joint. Stopping the activity and

giving the joint time to heal often is enough to resolve the problem. If you are not causing pain and not taking pain pills, then it is unlikely that you are causing further damage. If the problem is in your leg, using a crutch, or cane can help remove your body weight from the joint and give it an opportunity to heal. If the problem is in your shoulder, modifying your activity so that you keep your elbows near your body instead of reaching away from your body can help. The trick is finding ways to put the body part at rest while keeping your whole body functioning. Dr Prodrimos can make other suggestions for modifying your activities that will allow your body time to heal.

### **Listen To Your Body:**

No one knows your body better than you. If you listen to what it tells you about how your joints are feeling, you can respond in ways that help, instead of hurt them. When you reduce, modify or eliminate activities that cause pain, you give your body's natural healing abilities the chance to work. Although your knee or shoulder probably will not feel like you are 20 years old again, given the chance, it could feel a whole lot better and allow you to do the things you really need to do each day with less or no pain.



*Illinois  
Sportsmedicine and  
Orthopaedic Center*



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*No Pills -  
No Pain*

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1714 Milwaukee Ave.  
Glenview, IL 60025

Phone: 847-699-6810  
Fax: 847-699-6545  
Website: [www.ISMOC.net](http://www.ISMOC.net)

## The No Pills, No Pain Philosophy

Ultimately, the goal of any treatment is to get you feeling better. At first glance, pills seem to be the quick and easy way to reach this goal. But taking NSAIDs slow healing and actually encourage you to damage yourself more, because you cannot feel the pain that indicates that you are hurting yourself. Slowing down, taking the pressure off (with a crutch, rest, etc) and giving your joint the time it needs will minimize ongoing tissue damage and allow healing and recovery to occur at the fastest possible rate.

### What Are NSAIDs?

NSAIDs are a class of drugs that all function in similar ways. NSAIDs can relieve pain, decrease Inflammation, reduce fever, and act as a blood thinner. The group contains many common drugs including: Advil, Aleve, aspirin, Indocin, Daypro, and Voltaren . Additionally, there is a new subclass of these drugs called COX-2 inhibitors. This subclass, which contains the drug celecoxib (Celebrex), shares many of the characteristics of general NSAIDs, although they also



have some unique characteristics and problems.

Although NSAIDs and Cox-2 drugs are very good for some medical problems, when they are used for joint pain, they often create more problems than they solve.

### What are the Problems With Using NSAIDs or Other Pain Relievers?

**NSAIDs block pain:** When you take an NSAID, you feel better because the drug blocks the feelings of pain that your body is producing. However, NSAIDs do not get rid of the pain, they only keep you from feeling it for awhile. Pain is your body's way of telling you that something is wrong and damage is being done to some part of your body. When you don't feel the pain, you may use the injured area more and actually hurt it worse because you are not feeling the pain. When the medication wears off, the pain is worse than before. Or, if you keep taking the pain pills, eventually the pain gets so bad that you can feel it even while you are still taking the drugs. If treated promptly, many pains can be resolved and the damage reversed. If you wait until the pain (and therefore the damage) is much worse, it may be much more difficult to eliminate the pain.

**NSAIDs have side effects:** NSAIDs can cause a variety of stomach and intestinal problems. The most common are fairly mild, like heartburn, which can be uncomfortable, but

not very serious. But in some patients, more serious conditions like bleeding into the GI system can occur. Although this condition is uncommon, it can lead to serious complications and death. In fact, it was estimated in a New England Journal of Medicine article that 16,500 deaths occur in the US every year that are related to NSAID use.

**NSAIDs can slow healing:** Multiple studies have shown that using NSAIDs can slow the healing of broken bones, damaged ligament and other tissues. If you are trying to heal the damage done to a knee, shoulder or other joint, using NSAIDs can significantly lengthen the healing time.

One of the major claims of NSAIDs is that they are anti-inflammatory. In some people, like those with rheumatoid arthritis, blocking the inflammatory process is an important part of treating the disease. However, in healthy people, the inflammatory response is part of the body's normal process in healing injuries. In fact, by blocking these processes, NSAIDs can actually delay the healing process.

**Tylenol (Acetaminophen):** Tylenol is not an NSAID but it is a good pain killer. It does not have the same effects on healing tissue, although it has its own toxicity problems. In some cases, it can cause liver damage, especially if too much is taken. If an over the counter pain killer must be taken, it usually is a better choice than an NSAID. However, since it will block pain, it can lead to the same cycle of increasing damage requiring increasing pain medication that NSAIDs do.

