

# Is Tylenol (Acetaminophen) Anti-Inflammatory?

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[About Tylenol and acetaminophen](#) | [Treatment with acetaminophen](#) | [List of NSAIDs](#) | [About NSAIDs](#) |

[Takeaway](#)

## Introduction

Are you searching for over-the-counter relief from mild fever, headaches, or other aches and pains? Tylenol, also known by its generic name acetaminophen, is one drug that might help you. However, when you take a pain-relieving drug, there are some important questions:

- What does it do?
- Is it a nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID)?
- What do I need to know before choosing it?

Different types of drugs for pain relief, such as ibuprofen, naproxen, and acetaminophen, can have different effects. A drug's type might influence whether you can take it. To help you make safe choices, here's the rundown on how acetaminophen works and what type of pain reliever it is.

## Tylenol (acetaminophen) is not anti-inflammatory

Acetaminophen is an analgesic and an antipyretic drug. It's not an NSAID. In other words, it's not an anti-inflammatory drug. It does not help reduce swelling or inflammation. Instead, acetaminophen works by blocking your brain from releasing substances that cause the feeling of pain. It relieves minor aches and pains from:

- colds
- sore throats
- headaches and migraines
- body or muscle aches
- menstrual cramps
- arthritis
- toothaches

## Acetaminophen advantages and warnings

You may prefer acetaminophen over NSAIDs if you have high blood pressure or stomach ulcers or bleeding. That's because acetaminophen drugs such as Tylenol are less likely to increase your blood pressure or cause stomach pain or bleeding than NSAIDs are. However, acetaminophen may cause liver damage and liver failure,

especially at high doses. It can also increase the anti-blood-clotting effect of warfarin, a blood thinner.

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## Drugs that are anti-inflammatory

If you're on the hunt for an anti-inflammatory, Tylenol or acetaminophen is not the drug for you. Instead, look into ibuprofen, naproxen, and aspirin. These are all examples of anti-inflammatory drugs or NSAIDs. Some of the brands of these drugs include:

- Advil or Motrin (ibuprofen)
- Aleve (naproxen)
- Bufferin or Excedrin (aspirin)

[Read more: Guide to OTC anti-inflammatories »](#)

## How anti-inflammatory drugs work

NSAIDs work by blocking the formation of substances that contribute to fever, pain, and swelling. Reducing the inflammation helps reduce the pain that you feel.

These drugs are commonly used to lower fevers or to reduce minor pain caused from:

- headaches
- menstrual cramps
- arthritis
- body or muscles aches
- colds
- toothaches
- backaches

For people who do not have high blood pressure or a risk of stomach bleeding, NSAIDs are the preferred type of drug to reduce inflammation. They may also be the preferred pain reliever for people with liver disease or for treating menstrual cramps. The most common side effects of anti-inflammatory medications include:

- stomach upset
- heartburn
- nausea
- headache
- fatigue

Allergic reactions, skin reactions, and severe stomach bleeding can also occur. Using NSAIDs for a long time or taking more than directed can increase the risk of heart attack or stroke, especially if you have a history of heart or blood vessel disease.

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## Talk with your doctor

Acetaminophen drugs, such as Tylenol, are not NSAIDs. Acetaminophen does not treat inflammation. Still, acetaminophen can treat many of the same types of pain that NSAIDs treat. If you are unsure when to use either type of pain reliever, talk to your doctor. You should also talk to your doctor before you use acetaminophen if you have a medical condition or already take medication.

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