

## **HSE COVID-19: Information about your Medicines – Anti-Inflammatory Medicines**

### **Advice about Anti-Inflammatory medication and COVID-19**

The HSE is today, (Monday 16th March 2020), advising anyone with Covid-19 to continue to take any medication you were already taking, unless you are told not to by a healthcare professional. This includes anti-inflammatories (NSAID) such as ibuprofen, naproxen or diclofenac.

In response to false information about anti-inflammatory medication and Covid-19 circulating in media and on social media over the last 24 hours, Dr Colm Henry, Chief Clinical Officer of the HSE advises, “Only take one anti-inflammatory medication at a time. It is okay to take paracetamol and an anti-inflammatory like ibuprofen at the same time.

“There is no evidence to stop any medication at this time. There is no need to order more medicines than you need, as this will affect the supply of medicines to others, and there is no disruption to the supply of medicines. If you have respiratory symptoms, do not attend your pharmacy in person. Phone your pharmacist if you need to order a prescription. Ask a family member to collect any medicines you need.

“We are constantly evaluating emerging evidence about the most appropriate treatment of Covid-19. There is no specific treatment for coronavirus but many of the symptoms of the virus can be treated. If you get the virus, your healthcare professional will advise treatment based on your symptoms. The appropriate medication for an individual with symptoms of COVID-19 will depend on your symptoms, your other conditions and your other medication.”

### **HSE advice regarding treatment of symptoms of Covid-19:**

Drink plenty of water

Paracetamol or ibuprofen may help with symptoms such as pain or fever. Paracetamol is usually recommended as the first-line treatment for most people. Before taking any medication you should read the full package leaflet that comes with your medicine. You should also follow any advice a healthcare professional gives you.

Antibiotics do not work against coronavirus or any viruses. They only work against bacterial infections.

Supportive treatments, like oxygen therapy, can be given while your own body fights the virus. Life support can be used in extreme cases.

Regular medication, including anti-inflammatory medication, may be continued by people with COVID-19, unless advised otherwise by their healthcare professional. Only one anti-inflammatory medication (NSAID, e.g. ibuprofen, naproxen, diclofenac) should be taken at a time. An NSAID and paracetamol may be taken together if required.

Please see [www.hse.ie/coronavirus](http://www.hse.ie/coronavirus) for official information about Covid-19.

### **Background about false social media reports regarding anti-inflammatories**

A message circulating on social media yesterday regarding the use of anti-inflammatories is false. Cork University Hospital and its consultants did not make comments or recommendations about anti-inflammatory medication and patients with Covid-19.

The Infectious Diseases Society of Ireland last night confirmed the message was untrue, to be ignored and deleted. The message is false and should be removed from any social media site. Anybody who has circulated the message is asked to remove it and explain that it is false.

The French Health Minister has made a statement which recommends that paracetamol should be used and anti-inflammatory medication avoided in people with Covid-19 in France. This is based on French analysis and is not in line with the analysis and recommendations of the HSE and other EU countries.

Anti-inflammatory medication: A group of medicines with analgesic (reduces pain), antipyretic (reduces fever) and anti-inflammatory properties (reduces inflammation, in longer-term use) including ibuprofen (e.g. brands such as Nurofen<sup>®</sup>, Brufen<sup>®</sup>, some cold and flu remedies), naproxen (e.g. Naprosyn<sup>®</sup>, Vimovo<sup>®</sup>), diclofenac (e.g. Difene<sup>®</sup>, Diclac<sup>®</sup>), mefenamic acid (e.g. Ponstan<sup>®</sup>) and other medicines. Also known as Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs).

Paracetamol is an analgesic (pain killer) and antipyretic (reduces fever). It is available over the counter in many brands, including Calpol<sup>®</sup> and many cough and cold remedies.

Last updated on: 16 / 03 / 2020

### **Updated information 18 / 03 / 2020**

The HSE welcomes the statement from the European Medicines Agency today, 18<sup>th</sup> March.

The EMA states:

“There is currently no scientific evidence establishing a link between ibuprofen and worsening of COVID-19.”

“When starting treatment for fever or pain in COVID-19, patients and healthcare professionals should consider all available treatment options including paracetamol and NSAIDs.”

“In line with EU national treatment guidelines, patients and healthcare professionals can continue using NSAIDs (like ibuprofen) as per the approved product information.”

The EMA statement is available from <https://www.ema.europa.eu/en/news/ema-gives-advice-use-non-steroidal-anti-inflammatories-covid-19>