

HEALTH

'Heart attack risk' for common painkillers



A fresh study suggests there may be a link between taking high doses of common anti-inflammatory painkillers - such as ibuprofen - and heart attacks. The paper, published in The BMJ, builds on a previous body of work linking these drugs to heart problems. This research suggests the risk could be greatest in the first 30 days of taking the drugs. But scientists say the findings are not clear cut. They say other factors - not just the pills - could be involved. In the study an international team of scientists

analysed data from 446,763 people to try to understand when heart problems might arise. They focused on people prescribed non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (such as ibuprofen, diclofenac, celecoxib and naproxen) by doctors rather than those who bought the painkillers over the counter. **'Raise awareness'** Studying the data from Canada, Finland and the UK, researchers suggest taking these Nsaid painkillers to treat pain and inflammation could raise the risk of heart attacks even in the first week of use. And the risk was seen especially in the first month when people were taking high doses (for example more than 1200mg of ibuprofen a day). But scientists say there are a number of factors that make it difficult to be absolutely certain of the link. Are the painkillers definitely to blame? Kevin McConway, emeritus professor of statistics at The Open University, said the paper threw some light on possible relationships between Nsaid painkillers and heart attacks. But he added: "Despite the large number of patients involved, some aspects do still remain pretty unclear. "It remains possible that the painkillers aren't actually the cause of the extra heart attacks." He said if, for example, someone was prescribed a high dose of a painkiller because of severe pain, and then had a heart attack in the following week, it would be "pretty hard" to tell whether the heart attack had been caused by the painkiller or by whatever was the reason for prescribing it in the first place. It could even be down to something else entirely, he said. Prof McConway also pointed out that other influences on heart health - such as smoking and obesity - could not be taken into account fully and could be partly to blame. **What should patients do?** Doctors are already aware from previous studies that non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs could increase the risk of heart problems and strokes. And current UK guidelines state that Nsaids must be used carefully in people with heart problems and in some cases (such as very severe heart failure) they should not be used at all. Dr Mike Knapton of the British Heart Foundation, suggests patients and doctors weigh up the risks and benefits of taking high doses of these common painkillers, particularly if they have survived a heart attack or are at higher risk. Meanwhile, GP leader Prof Helen Stokes-Lampard said it was important that any decision to prescribe was based on a patient's individual circumstances and medical history, and was regularly reviewed. She said that as new research was published, it was important that it was taken on board to help inform guidelines. But she added: "The use of Nsaids in general practice to treat patients with chronic pain is reducing, and some of the drugs in this study are no longer routinely prescribed in the UK, such as coxibs, as we know that long-term use can lead to serious side-effects for some patients." **What about over-the-counter use?** This paper looks at patients prescribed painkillers rather than people buying them in a shop or taking them without medical advice. And it suggests higher doses than those often recommended for one-off use (for example more than 1200mg of ibuprofen a day) carry some of the greatest risks. But Prof Helen Stokes-Lampard said the study should also raise awareness among patients who self-medicated with Nsaids to treat their pain. According to NHS advice, people should generally take the lowest dose of Nsaids for the shortest time possible. And if people find they need to take Nsaids very often or are taking higher doses than recommended, medical advice should be sought. **How big are the risks?** Independent researchers say one of the main pitfalls of the study is it does not clearly spell out what the absolute risk - or the baseline risk of people having a heart attacks - is. And they say without an understanding of the baseline, it is then hard to judge the impact of any possible increase in risk. Meanwhile, Prof Stephen Evans, of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, said though the study indicated that even a few days' use was associated with an increased risk, it might not be as clear as the authors suggested. He added: "The two main issues are that the risks are relatively small, and for most people who are not at high risk of a heart attack, these findings have minimal implications." *BBC*

ENTERTAINMENT

Cannes festival: Netflix film Meyerowitz Stories 'made for big



screen' The director of a second film at the centre of a row over Netflix's place at Cannes said he always intended for it to be seen on the big screen. Noah Baumbach said he made The Meyerowitz Stories "as I make all my movies, with the expectation it will be shown on the big screen". There has been controversy over Netflix's features being included in the competition for the Palme d'Or. Netflix has not screened its productions in French cinemas. But Baumbach said he made The Meyerowitz Stories, starring Emma Thompson and Dustin Hoffman, "independently,

with independent money" and it was acquired by Netflix in post-production. The family comedy drama, which features Ben Stiller and Adam Sandler as half-brothers reunited as they plan an exhibition for their sculptor father Harold (played by Hoffman), is his first to be shown at the French film festival. There were a few boos as the Netflix logo was shown at the film's first showing, on Sunday morning - but the cheers were louder. That was a marked difference from the reception given to Okja, the other film from the Netflix stable, which received loud boos during the opening credits - and both times round, as it had to be re-started due to technical issues. Baumbach said of the importance of the cinema screen: "I believe in that and I think it's unique and singular - an experience that's not going to go away, in my opinion. Cannes jury president Pedro Almodovar said last week that he could not imagine the Palme d'Or going to a film that had not received a cinema release, stressing the importance of the big screen. Baumbach said he hadn't heard those quotes, while Hoffman traced the shape of a TV with his hands as he added: "I have a very big screen". From next year, films will have to be released in French cinemas if they want to be considered. It was a high-spirited news conference, with Rain Man star Hoffman asking a journalist for his side profile at one point, so he could see the shape of his nose - after the reporter said people had asked if he was related to the star. And when another said the film was "interesting", he replied: "That's not a good word. You didn't like it, did you?" Stiller, who also played Hoffman's son in comedy Meet the Fockers, said how much he had enjoyed seeing his co-star's films when growing up. But a mock grumpy Hoffman retorted: "I resent people saying they grew up with my work. Everyone who's older than me - please stand up." Emma Thompson plays Harold's third wife Maureen, an alcoholic who wears beads and tie-dye tunics. She said of her role in the dysfunctional family drama: "Because I'm not from America, or that kind of family, it was a foreign country to me. "I read it, and thought: 'I have no idea what's going to happen, but it's going to be fascinating.'" *BBC*

THE ULTIMATE EXPERIENCE - from a talk by Prem Rawat [Part 3 of 4]

WHEN I AM JUST ME

An alligator knows who an alligator is. A cat knows who a cat is. A dog knows it's a dog. The human being, with the biggest brain for the body size, thinks: "Hmm. Who am I? Who am I?" With the run of the earth and the surface of the ocean, the human being asks: "Why am I here? What am I doing here?" Maybe I will be the happiest if I can be just me. If I only knew who I was. Who am I?

Things change. I remember a time in my life when I was very young. I didn't go to school. Play, play, play. I was the youngest and I would get up really early in the morning. I couldn't wait to get up. I would be lying there, looking at the window to see the first tinge of light so I could dash outside. I used to watch in incredible amazement how the dew was changing colours, sparkling like diamonds when the sun's first rays hit it.

When I was put in kindergarten, I remember I was crying and crying. My home was better. And then I got used to it. See the change? I actually got used to it. And I traded getting up in the morning and watching the dew for kindergarten.

Then I was enrolled in school, at St. Joseph's Academy. And again I remember crying. I didn't want to go there. It was new; it was different. All my friends were back in kindergarten. And I exchanged kindergarten for St. Joseph's. Things kept changing. I kept exchanging. Changing / exchanging.

In some of that, there were things that were not good and they went. And there were things that were superb and they went, too. Indiscriminate throwing out of stuff. And the only thing that has remained constant has been the coming and going of breath. And the desire to be fulfilled.

WHERE IS HEAVEN?

Even when I am fulfilled, the desire to be fulfilled grows greater. It's like love. When you don't love, there is no love. When you love, you love even more. Then you can love even more and more and more. A lot of people think their objective in life is to be fulfilled so that they won't have the desire to be fulfilled. That would be a sad day. When you fall in love with someone, you don't fall in love so that you can stop loving, do you? You fall in love so you can love even more. So you can feel that love more and more. And that has remained constant for me.

When I was growing up, I was the youngest. Now I'm grown up. The only thing that has been constant is this breath that keeps coming. It's a gift. And I accept that and I understand.

It is true that I'm happiest when I am me. When I am who I am—someone who breathes and feels gratitude in my heart for being alive, a thankfulness that I am alive. There are people who are so busy trying to figure out what's going to happen to them when they are not alive any more that they have forgotten how to live.

They are so preoccupied with the heaven after death that they have forgotten the heaven on Earth. Voluntarily, they have walked out of the Pearly Gates. There is a heaven on Earth and you are equipped to take full advantage of it. Where is this heaven? It's not in some building.

This heaven is in the heart of every single human being. The power that created us and knew us so well must have thought: "If I create a heaven that's a physical place, I know these guys will forget how to get there. They'll misplace the address and get lost. I know what I will do. I'll place heaven within them. So wherever they go, one thing they can't do is get lost."

Information provided by: Mclraith / The Prem Rawat Foundation

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