A Dose of Knowledge: Safely Managing Your Pain

Custom Webinar Suggested Script – Part 1

Slide 1 – Title Slide

Welcome to *A Dose of Knowledge: Safely Managing Your Pain*. [Introduce yourself and your organization]. Thank you for taking the time to tune into today's webinar and to learn more about safely managing your pain.

Today, we will discuss the different types of over-the-counter (OTC) and prescription pain medications; the importance of safely choosing and taking these medications; and some non-drug options for pain management.

Slide 2 – Participant Pre-Survey

Before we start, please take a few minutes to take this pre-survey. This survey is designed to see what you know, and a follow-up survey will see what you've learned. This will help determine the effectiveness of the workshop resources and are completely anonymous. The pre-survey can be accessed with the link or the QR code on the screen. With most Smartphones you should be able to use your camera to open the QR code. Also, if you can open the survey in a new tab, that will keep you from having to come back to this video.

Note that by completing both surveys, you will be entered for a chance to win a gift card.

Slide 3 – Before You Reach for Pain Relief

You're probably tuning in today because you or a loved one uses medications to help manage pain. A study found that more than 25 million Americans deal with some level of daily pain.

Acute pain has a sudden onset, can be severe, but lasts for a short period of time—from hours to days, but no longer than six months. It can be caused by injury, illness, or surgery.

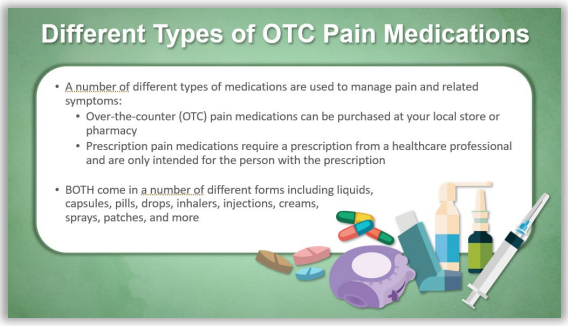
Persistent (or chronic pain) is ongoing or recurrent pain that lasts beyond the usual course of acute illness or injury—usually several months to many years. Persistent pain doesn't mean that a person is always in pain. It can be mild to severe, complex to manage, and caused by injury, arthritis, cancer, and other diseases. If you or a loved one suffers from persistent pain, you know that it can cause physical distress and seriously impact your quality of life.

Slide 4 – Medications Have Different Risks & Benefits

Different medications can help manage different pain needs. They also have different risks and benefits that you need to consider. Whether you take medication occasionally for minor aches and pains, or suffer from persistent pain, it's important that you choose the right pain medication and know how to use it safely and appropriately.

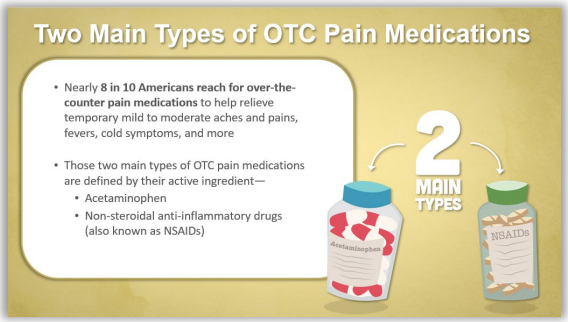
You may have heard about the dangers of doubling up and taking too much acetaminophen, or the cardiovascular risks of NSAIDs. You may have concerns about balancing the risks and benefits of prescription pain medication opioids and non-pharmacological (or non-drug) therapies. Today's webinar will address many of these concerns, but the best thing you can do is to make a personalized pain management plan with your healthcare professional that balances benefits and risks, and that works for you.

Developing a pain management plan should involve setting and sharing your goals with your healthcare professional. This may include things like spending more time with family, getting back to hobbies, exercising more, managing pain while healing, etc. You should also discuss your individual risk factors as well as other medications you currently take including over-the-counter medications, prescriptions, supplements, topicals, vitamins, and herbals; as well as your medical history.



Slide 5 – Different Types of OTC Pain Medications

There are a number of different types of medications that are used to manage pain and related symptoms. Some are available over-the-counter (OTC) and can be purchased at your local store or pharmacy. Others require a prescription from a healthcare professional and are only intended for the person with the prescription. They both come in a number of different forms including liquids, capsules, pills, drops, inhalers, injections, creams, sprays, patches, and more.



Slide 6 – Two Main Types of OTC Pain Medications

OTC medications are an important tool in self-management of minor aches and pains and nearly eight in 10 Americans reach for over-the-counter pain medications to help relieve temporary mild to moderate aches and pains, fevers, cold symptoms, and more.

Choosing an OTC pain medication can seem overwhelming since there are hundreds of choices, but there are really only two main types. They treat similar symptoms but work differently in the body and have different indications, risks and benefits, active ingredients, and directions for use. The information in today's webinar will help you chose the medications that will do the best job treating your pain and that are safest for you.

There are two main types of OTC pain medications—acetaminophen and nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (also known as NSAIDs)—which are defined by their active ingredient. These two types of medications are found in pain relievers, fever reducers, sleep aids, cough & cold remedies, and medications for allergy relief.

Let's take a deeper dive to learn a bit more about OTC medications. The video I am about to play gives valuable information about how you can choose the right OTC pain medication for you or your loved one AND take it safely.

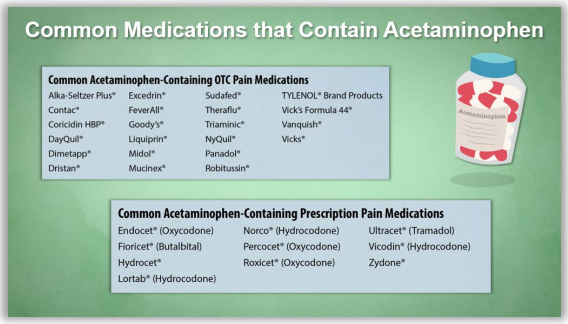
Slide 7

[Play the video *OTC Pain Medication, What You Need to Know Before You Reach for Pain Relief* (length 6:54)]

Slide 8 – Acetaminophen

There are now more than 600 OTC and prescription medications that contain acetaminophen.

[Ask participants to share in the chat or over audio if they can name a brand name OTC medication that contains acetaminophen.]



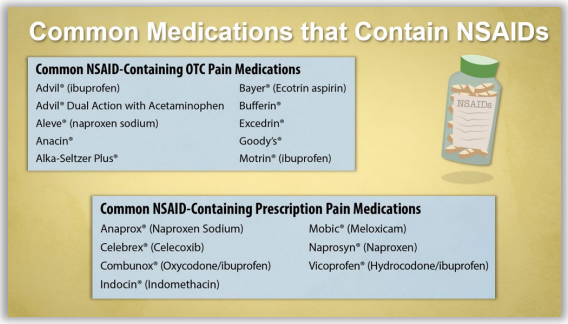
Slide 9 – Common Medications that Contain Acetaminophen

Here are some other OTC medications that contain acetaminophen that you may take or recognize. Additionally, prescription medications that contain acetaminophen include Vicodin, Percocet, and more.

Slide 10 – Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs)

NSAIDs are found in more than 900 OTC and prescription medications. NSAID use is very common, especially among older adults. Some of the most well-known NSAIDs are aspirin, ibuprofen, and naproxen sodium.

[Ask participants if they can name any OTC medication that contains an NSAID.]



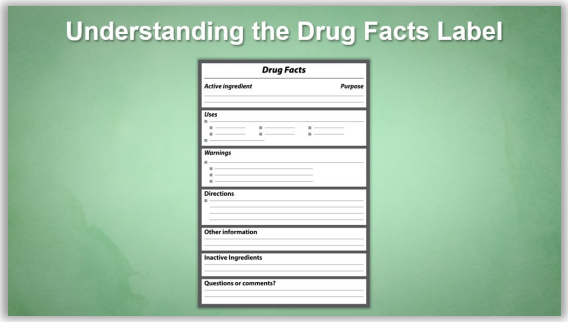
Slide 11 – Common Medications that Contain NSAIDs

There are even medications that contain BOTH acetaminophen and NSAIDs such as Excedrin Migraine®, Excedrin Extra-Strength®, Vanquish®, and Advil Dual Action with Acetaminophen®.

Slide 12 – Safe and Effective When Taken As Directed

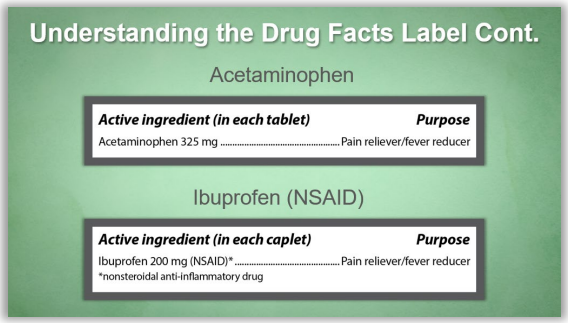
OTC pain medications are safe for most people when they take them as directed. However, although you can buy them without a prescription, all medications can be dangerous if misused or abused. Acetaminophen and NSAIDs both have risks which vary from person to person.

One option may be better for you than others because of medications that you already take, or because of other health conditions you have. As we age, medications can also affect us differently than when we were younger, and our risk of adverse events goes up[3]. So just because you took a certain medication before doesn't mean it's still appropriate now. Always remember that if you're unsure of which medication you should take, you should talk to your healthcare professional or pharmacist, and never hesitate to ask questions.



Slide 13 – Understanding the Drug Facts Label

The Drug Facts Label is listed on the back of the OTC medication packaging and is required by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (the FDA) to contain specific information about ingredients, warnings, dosing directions, and other details on taking the medication safely. It's important that you can properly read and understand the Drug Facts Label so that you can safely choose and take the medication that is best for you and your symptoms. And remember to reread the Drug Facts Label each time you take a medication.



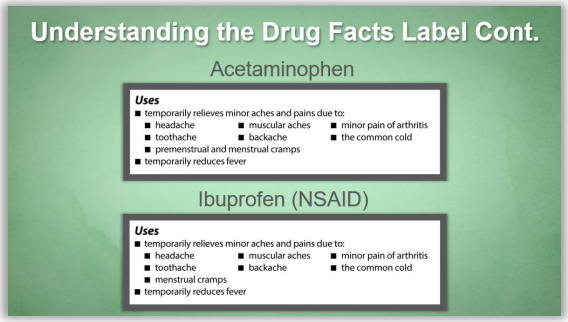
Slide 14 – Understanding the Drug Facts Label Cont.

Now, let's move on to breaking down the different sections of the Drug Facts Label.

The following slides will show you details from the Drug Facts Label for two different pain medications with different active ingredients—acetaminophen and NSAID.

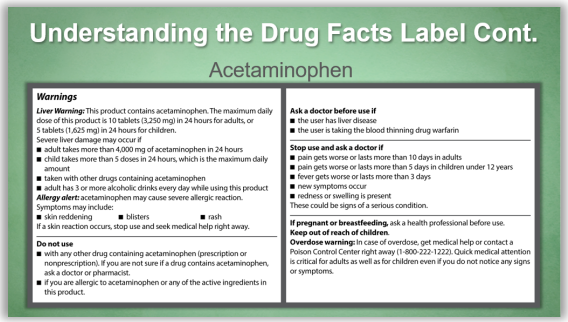
This first section is the "Active Ingredients/Purpose" section. It tells you the active ingredients that make the medication work, the primary purpose of the ingredient, and how much active ingredient is in each dose. Different medications can contain different amounts of active ingredients in each dose—for example, regular strength versus extra strength, or 8-hour release.

On the top, you see that the active ingredient is acetaminophen, that its purpose is to relieve pain and/or reduce a fever, and that each dose contains 325 milligrams of acetaminophen. On the bottom, you see that the main ingredient is ibuprofen (an NSAID), that its purpose is to relieve pain and/or reduce a fever, and that each dose contains 200 milligrams of ibuprofen.



Slide 15 – Understanding the Drug Facts Label Cont.

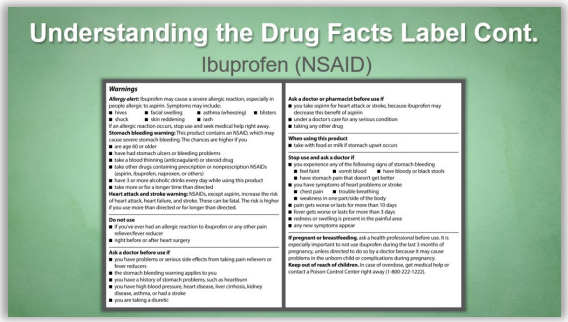
Moving down to the "Uses" section, you see details about the symptoms that the medication is intended to treat. For instance, on both the acetaminophen and NSAID labels, you see that these medications are meant to temporarily relieve minor aches and pains due to headache, muscular aches, backache, minor pain of arthritis, the common cold, toothache, menstrual cramps; and temporarily reduce fever.



Slide 16 - Understanding the Drug Facts Label Cont.

The "Warnings" section is essential to read since it includes important safety information. It tells you when NOT to take the medication, when to consult your healthcare professional first, when to stop taking the medication, and which medications to avoid combining it with.

For example, this label shows that when taking acetaminophen, you are at a higher risk for serious side effects such as severe liver damage if you exceed the maximum daily amount, take any other blood-thinning or acetaminophen-containing drugs at the same time, consume more than three alcoholic beverages while taking the medication, or already have liver disease.

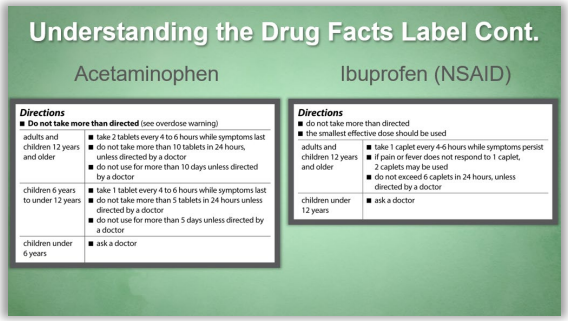


Slide 17 - Understanding the Drug Facts Label Cont.

NSAIDs (except for aspirin) put people at a higher risk for stomach bleeding, especially people who are 60 years or older, have a history of stomach ulcers or bleeding problems, take other blood thinners or steroids, or drink more than three alcohol-containing drinks per day. There are a number of other conditions noted that can increase your risk—if you have any of them, consult your healthcare professional before you take an NSAID. You should not use an NSAID right before or after heart surgery. Also, several years ago, the FDA required an update to the Drug Facts labeling on all NSAIDs—except aspirin—to provide consumers additional information relating to the risk of heart attack and stroke associated with NSAIDs. Risk for these serious side effects goes up as early as the first weeks of use and grows the longer you take them[4], and the more you take. Note that if you are one of the many people that takes low-dose aspirin for protection against heart attack and stroke, ibuprofen can interfere with that protective effect.

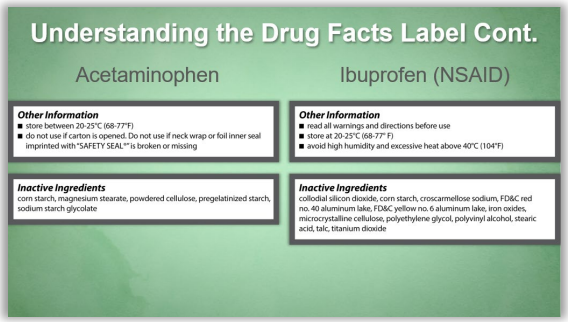
Other warnings that might be contained on the label include potential allergic reactions, side effects, and more. See the Drug Facts Label on your medication for all warnings.

That's a lot and can make OTC pain medications seem scary, but they are generally safe and play an important role in pain management.



Slide 18 - Understanding the Drug Facts Label Cont.

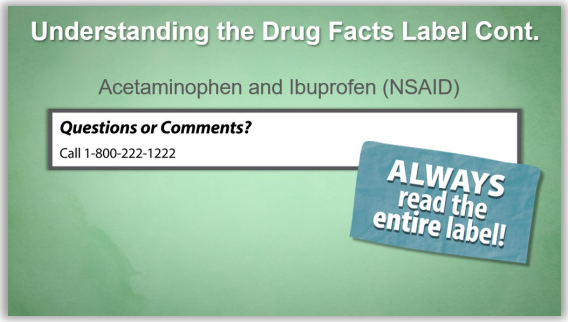
This next section lists the "Directions" for taking your medication. This section is very important as it details the proper dose of medication to take, how often to take it, and how much you can take in a 24-hour period.



Slide 19 - Understanding the Drug Facts Label Cont.

The "Other Information" section includes information on properly storing your medication to prevent expiration. Most medications should be stored in a cool, dry place and up and away and out of sight of little ones, or people who may want to abuse medications. Also, you should not use a medication if the safety seal is broken or missing.

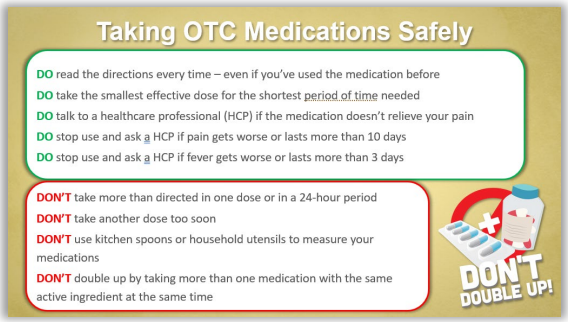
Next, you will see the "Inactive Ingredients" section. This section lists any other ingredients used in the medication, including any preservatives, stabilizers, flavorings, and colorings. Be sure to read this section thoroughly, especially if you or a loved one has an allergy.



Slide 20 - Understanding the Drug Facts Label Cont.

Lastly, the "Questions or Comments" section lists the number to call if you have any questions about the medication. You can call the company's 800 number listed on the label, the local Poison Control Center at 800-222-1222, or your healthcare professional. Remember, your pharmacist can also help answer questions.

Once you've chosen an OTC pain medication that's right for you and your pain, there are a number of things that you should do to ensure that you and your loved ones are taking them safely and appropriately.



Slide 21 – Taking OTC Medications Safely

Here are some important ways to make sure you're not taking too much OTC medication:

- Even if you've taken a medication before, read the label to make sure you remember the dosing directions correctly.
- Take the smallest effective dose for the shortest time needed.
- If a medication doesn't effectively relieve your pain, have a conversation with your healthcare professional about treating the cause of pain, rather than just relieving the symptoms.
- Stop use and contact your healthcare professional if your pain gets worse, you develop new symptoms, you have redness or swelling where you have the pain, or the pain lasts for more than 10 days.
- Stop use and contact your healthcare professional if your fever gets worse or lasts for more than three days.
- Don't take more than directed in one dose.
- Don't take more than directed in a 24-hour period, even if you still have fever or pain. The daily maximum for adults over the age of 12 is 4,000 mg (milligrams) of acetaminophen, 1,200 mg of ibuprofen (an NSAID), and 660 mg of naproxen sodium (an NSAID).
- Don't take another dose too soon. Make sure you keep track of when you took your last dose.
- If your medication comes with a dosing device, don't use something else like kitchen spoons or household utensils as they are not designed to measure medications.
- Don't double-up by taking more than one medication with the same active ingredient at a time, and don't forget to count your prescription medications and other OTC medications like those for cold and flu, because they could also contain acetaminophen or an NSAID and count towards the daily maximum.

Slide 22 – In Case of An Overdose

Taking more than directed can result in an overdose, and severe consequences can occur. If you or someone you love takes more than the recommended dose of any medication, call the Poison Control Center at 800-222-1222 (often listed on the Drug Facts Label), even if they feel fine, since serious consequences can occur without any symptoms.

Let's turn now to pain medications that people can get with a prescription from their healthcare professional. Prescription pain medications, sometimes referred to as opioids, are designed to manage moderate-to-severe pain. Commonly prescribed opioids include codeine, fentanyl, hydrocodone, morphine, oxycodone, tramadol, and others. Your healthcare professional may also prescribe other medications to help manage pain like steroids, muscle relaxants, antidepressants, anticonvulsants, interventional pain procedures, and non-pharmacological (or non-drug) therapies.

Prescription pain medications can be very effective in managing moderate to severe pain when used under the supervision of a healthcare professional; however, some can be habit-forming, or addictive if not managed under the care of a healthcare professional. Some can also be abused and are associated with accidental overdose deaths in people of all ages.

Slide 23 – Preventing Abuse of Prescription Medications

Prescription misuse and abuse often starts in the home. Some tips to avoid misuse and abuse are to:

- Never share your prescription medications with anyone.
- Always keep your medications stored safely and in their original containers to avoid any confusion. Be sure to relock the safety cap after each use.

- Always store prescription pain medications up and away and out of sight of family members or visitors in your home—especially young children. You may wish to use a lockable storage container.
- Only use as prescribed by your healthcare professional.
- Make sure you understand and always follow the dosing instructions from your healthcare professional.
- Never take more than one medication with the same active ingredient at the same time unless directed to by your healthcare professional.
- Seek advice from your healthcare professional to determine whether or not you are ready to stop using your prescription medication.

Slide 24 – Non-Drug Therapies for Pain Management

If you are looking for non-drug therapies that can be used as alternatives or alongside your pain medications, there are a number that may help relieve your pain.

Non-drug therapies include mind-body exercises like yoga and meditation, aromatherapy, and deep breathing which can help your mind and body relax by focusing on an enjoyable and soothing activity. Pet therapy, which includes spending time with a therapy animal, may help improve pain and emotional distress. Acupuncture or massage may help alleviate stress and ease painful areas or trigger points in your joints and muscles. Regular exercise routines and physical therapy sessions can help with stiffness, improve joint mobility and flexibility, strengthen your muscles, and combat fatigue to help you better manage your pain. There are also pain management devices that stimulate your nerves to help control your pain. These devices and all non-drug therapy options should only be used in consultation with your healthcare professional.

Slide 25 – What Have We Learned?

Educating yourself on the different types of over-the-counter and prescription pain medications, and how to choose and use them, not only benefits you, but also protects your loved ones.

Remember to always read the Drug Facts Label and know exactly what types of medications you are taking. In addition to over-the-counter and prescription medications, there are many non-drug therapies you can use to safely and effectively relieve your pain. If you are ever unsure if what you are taking is right for you, talk to a healthcare professional like your doctor, physician assistant, nurse practitioner, or pharmacist.

Hopefully you learned some valuable information today that will help you make informed decisions about your health and protect those around you.

Please take a few minutes to take the post-survey on the screen. Remember that your answers are anonymous, and they will help improve these and other education resources on medication safety. You must also complete this post-survey to be entered for a chance to win a gift card.

Thank you for joining today's webinar!

Slide 26 – Thank You!