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The sinister secrets swirling inside your teapot

As carbonated beverages come under increasing attack and researchers debate just how good or bad coffee is for you, more Americans are trading in their Big Gulps and venti lattes for cups of tea. This ancient beverage—whether it be black, green, white, oolong, or herbal—is considered by many to be the original health drink. Both folklore and research shows that tea can offer a cuppa hot cures for everything from obesity to cancer.

But as tea becomes bigger business in the U.S., we are now finding out that the preparation, manufacturing, packaging, and marketing practices of many popular tea brands leave a lot to be desired.

In fact, a surprising number of teas can actually be health hazards.

Of course, the manufacturers that tout their teas as miracle cures don't want to reveal this steamy secret. But I will.

Here's everything you need to know about how to get all of tea's health benefits… without putting yourself at risk.

Tea is big business

Black, green, white, and oolong tea all come from the leaves of the same plant (*Camellia sinensis*, or Chinese camellia), but are cured and prepared differently. This distinction accounts for each tea's unique color and flavor. Herbal teas, on the other hand, are made from a variety of botanicals.

Tea has been an important plant commodity for thousands of years. It motivated early European exploration and trade expeditions into China and India, and helped spur the Dutch and British mercantile empires. And of course, it contributed to the American Revolution when British King George III imposed a tax on tea in 1773. Although this tea tax was miniscule compared to the multiple open and hidden taxes heaped on Americans by our own government today, it was enough to spark the Boston Tea Party. Americans took their tea, and their liberty, seriously in those days.

Today, tea is the most widely consumed beverage in the world. Production is estimated at over $15 billion a year, with Americans accounting for more than $2 billion of that total.[1,2] On any given day, more than half of all Americans drink some type of tea, according to the Tea Association of the USA.[2]

The supply of black, green, oolong, and white tea is tightly controlled by a vertical near-monopoly. According to The United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization, only seven companies account for 85 percent of the world's tea production.[3] Two main tea packers, India's Tata Global Beverages (which makes Tetley tea) and the Netherlands' Unilever (Lipton), dominate the trade through strong influences on sourcing, supplies, and transport.[4] Although tea, as with other natural plant products, cannot be patented, the dominant players effectively control it as if it were.

When it comes to herbal teas, there is still some independence. Although Celestial Seasonings is the star of this market, there are a variety of smaller natural, organic, and medicinal herbal tea manufacturers.

And today, tea has become more popular than ever before, thanks to the powerful health claims made about it in recent years.

Does the proof support the promises?

People in the U.S. are increasingly attracted to tea because it can theoretically help prevent chronic diseases. You've probably seen teas touting everything from "weight-

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In this issue:

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loss" to "anti-aging" benefits. But science doesn't support all of these marketing claims.

Tea is very rich in polyphenols—natural compounds that have been shown in scientific studies to have anticancer, anti-inflammatory, and antioxidant properties. A typical cup of brewed green tea contains between 80 to 100 mg of polyphenols. One of the most potent of these polyphenols—epigallocatechin gallate (EGCG)—accounts for about 25 to 30 mg of that total.[4]

However, the typical amount of EGCG that is proven in scientific experiments to have beneficial health effects is 300 to 400 mg. So to get the right "dose" of EGCG in terms of proven health benefits, **you would have to drink 10 to 16 cups** of tea per day. I doubt even the most avid tea drinker could guzzle down that much.

So practically speaking, drinking tea may not be the "cure-all" it's been made out to be. But there are much darker sides to the tea story you need to know about.

The darker sides of tea you haven't heard about

Not all of tea's polyphenols are as beneficial to your health as EGCG. For instance, black, green, white, and oolong teas are naturally high in tannins and tannic acid—polyphenols that have strong astringent properties. Tannins have a powerful effect on animal cells and tissues and are traditionally used to tan leather. So imagine what too many of these compounds can do to the lining of your stomach and intestines. No wonder some people experience gastric irritation from the strong tannins in teas.

Tea also naturally contains oxalic acid. Too much of this compound, especially if you are chronically dehydrated, can lead to the formation of painful kidney stones.

In addition, tea typically contains theophylline, a stimulant that expands respiratory passages. Which sounds like a generally good thing. Except theophylline can also keep you awake at night. What's more, theophylline is a powerful diuretic that, in essence, pumps water out of your cells and tissues and causes dehydration. Thus, tea is certainly not a healthy substitute for the water and electrolytes you need for normal hydration.

If you think you can counteract this problem with a "caffeine-free" tea, remember that there is no such thing in nature. Removing the caffeine from tea involves the use of artificial chemical solvents.

Limiting your tea consumption to a few cups per day can help control the problems caused by tannins, oxalic acid, and caffeine/theophylline. But then you're not drinking enough to get optimal, active doses of tea's beneficial health ingredients.

So there is a natural conundrum inherent in tea. And that doesn't even take into account what modern cultivation and manufacturing has done to this plant…

A teacup full of toxins

Recent investigations into what is really going on with teas today are truly shocking. In ancient China, tea leaves went directly from the plant to the pot. But today's teas are often laden with artificial flavors and ingredients, genetically modified organisms, pesticides, and other toxins. And these toxins may be hiding in some of the most popular tea brands.

A recent independent analysis commissioned by Glaucus Research Group found that 91 percent of Celestial Seasonings teas contained

pesticide residues that exceed U.S. limits.[5] Celestial Seasonings denies these findings based on its own research, but hadn't released that research as of November 2013.[6]

The Glaucus analysis found that Celestial's Sleepytime Kids Goodnight Grape Herbal tea contained 0.26 ppm of propachlor, which has been determined to be a carcinogen at any level under California's Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act of 1986. That's some "goodnight" for your children. Meanwhile, Celestial's "Wellness" tea line was found to contain traces of propargite, also a known carcinogen, and a teratogen, which causes birth defects. That doesn't sound like "wellness" to me.

To the credit of the FDA, it has already issued two warnings to Celestial Seasonings for poor quality control in the company's manufacturing practices. But warnings aren't the same as a recall. And teas containing these toxins are undoubtedly still on supermarket shelves across the country.

So are you better off with freshly prepared teas versus the packaged teas that sit on grocery shelves? People line up to pay for overpriced teas at places like Teavana, just like they pay for overpriced coffees from Starbucks (which, unsurprisingly, is now Teavana's parent company). But are they getting anything healthier for their "Teavana experience"? As with the coffee at Starbucks, Teavana makes a big show of preparing tea. But are the "tearistas" simply like magicians, misdirecting your attention away from the reality of what you're drinking? That may be worth shedding a few "tear-istas" right there.

Teavana asserts that it rigorously tests its tea. And that each batch conforms to European Union pesticide standards. Yet, Glaucus Research also commissioned independent lab testing on Teavana tea. And the lab found that fully 100 percent of the Teavana tea samples it tested contained pesticides that violate U.S. food pesticide standards.[7]

It also found that 77 percent of the samples violated E.U. pesticide import standards for dry tea. Meaning those teas couldn't be sold to E.U. consumers. And 62 percent of the tea samples contained endosulfan, a pesticide banned in the U.S., the E.U., and 144 other countries because it may impair fertility and cause birth defects. And one Teavana tea, Monkey Picked Oolong, actually contained 23 different pesticides. So now who's the monkey ?

So much for "rigorous testing."

And these are just the disturbing facts about pesticides—which wind up in teas unintentionally. What about the ingredients manufacturers are intentionally adding to teas?

Just how natural is that "natural flavor"?

Many popular tea brands try to get away with using the term "natural flavors." But just because the flavor may be found in nature doesn't necessarily mean it comes *from* the natural source. Tea companies can break down anything found in nature and if it ends up tasting like the flavor they want to use, they can add it to any product and claim "natural flavor" on the label.

And then there are the teas that actually list "artificial flavor" or

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The best way to get the benefits of green tea

There is no way to know *precisely* how much green tea you have to drink to get the desired effects. For example, each cup of green tea contains different amounts of the active ingredient EGCG.

Manufacturing practices and products vary. And you may steep your tea longer than I do. So it's a guessing game. (And remember, when I report on green tea, I mean the real green tea infusion that you steep. You can't know how much EGCG might be in the sugary, bottled green teas sold at the convenience store. So don't be fooled.)

Fortunately, there's a way to get around all of these problems.

Scientists now know accurately and precisely how much EGCG you need in order to get the health benefits associated with green tea. And it's actually much easier to get this exact amount by taking a green tea extract supplement instead of drinking green tea. This lets you avoid the guessing games.

With a supplement, you know exactly how much EGCG you get in each capsule. You also avoid the kidney stone issue because green tea supplements don't contain oxalic acid. Plus, the supplements don't contain caffeine or theophylline. So there is no diuretic effect.

Most studies show benefits from 300 to 400 mg of green tea extract.

"artificial color" on their packages. These artificial ingredients typically come from petroleum or coal tar sources.

Some tea companies also add modified corn starch to their products. This additive is likely made from genetically modified corn. As I've pointed out before, the vast majority of corn grown in the U.S. today is genetically engineered.

Plastic—it's in the bag

Beyond the tea itself, there are also problems with the packaging.

Regular tea bags are commonly made from rayon, nylon, PVC, polypropylene, or polyethylene terephthalate (PET). And the popular new sachets and mesh bags may look pretty as they showcase loose-leaf teas. But they often contain polylactic acid (PLA), a biodegradable plastic that is likely made from a GMO-corn-based material.[8] While these chemicals are generally considered to be inert and safe, the plastic may still leach out and break down when exposed to heat—like the boiling water used to prepare tea.

Unfortunately, paper tea bags can actually be worse than plastic. Some paper tea bags are treated with epichlorohydrin, a chemical primarily used to create epoxy resins and glues. Epichlorohydrin is also used as a pesticide and is considered a potential carcinogen by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health.[9] When epichlorohydrin gets wet (as in tea brewing), it breaks down into chemicals that have been shown to cause cancer, infertility, and birth defects in animals.

All the antioxidants in all the tea in China can't counter the effects of these chemical additives and toxins.

The only tea I recommend

Whatever you do, stay away from Lipton, Celestial Seasonings, Tazo, Teavana, Bigelow, Republic of Tea, Twinings, Yogi, Tea Forte, Mighty Leaf, and Trader Joe's brands of tea. These are among the worst offenders when it comes to toxic ingredients.

However, there are a few teas that appear to be free of pesticides, artificial flavors, GMOs, and harmful packaging: Allegro, Numi, Rishi, Choice, and Traditional Medicinals.

But the only tea I really recommend comes from the South African red bush plant. Red bush (or rooibos) is naturally free of caffeine, oxalic acid, and tannins. Plus, research shows that rooibos can lower blood sugar.[10] In addition, rooibos has even more natural disease-fighting compounds than green tea. And it hydrates you at the cellular level.

The brand I helped formulate, Red Joe Rooibos Powder, is also 100 percent certified organic—meaning no pesticides or chemical fertilizers were used to grow it—and it has no added ingredients. You can add Red Joe powder to water or any beverage, hot or cold. JC

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The South Pacific secret with a 99 percent success rate against lung cancer

You won't see any colored ribbons flying when it comes to lung cancer. I've written about how little the government-industrial-medical complex has to offer when it comes to this deadly disease, even though it's the No. 1 cancer killer in the U.S. today (see "The secret killers lurking behind all those pink ribbons" in the November 2013 issue of *Insiders' Cures*).

But recently, researchers at the University of Minnesota and Texas Tech University found that an extract of kava root—a South Pacific herb—prevented the formation of lung tumors in 99 percent of laboratory animals they studied.[1]

That's an unprecedented result among cancer studies using nutrients and natural products.

So why haven't you heard about this until now?

Deadly bias

There are many reasons why lung cancer doesn't get the attention of other, less deadly cancers. First of all, nobody is pushing lung cancer screening the way the multimillion-dollar colonoscopy industry is relentlessly pushing an overly costly, dangerous, often unnecessary procedure (see "The hidden, grisly dangers of 'routine' colonoscopies" in the September 2013 issue of *Insiders' Cures*).

In fact, the "experts" at the National Cancer Institute (NCI) have even made light of a new imaging technique for lung cancer screening. Even though this screening method is safe and appears to be at least as effective as the other cancer screening programs they push.

NCI experts claim people at high risk for lung cancer don't care enough about their health to get cancer screenings (see "How the government could prevent 12,000 lung cancer deaths per year, but won't" in the March 25, 2013 *Daily Dispatch*). In fact, lung cancer victims are made to feel guilty and ashamed. And health professionals are often biased against these victims—many of whom have to hide their diagnosis.

All this, of course, because the assumption is that only smokers get lung cancer.

But believe it or not, people who have never smoked a cigarette in their lives also get lung cancer. In fact, according to the NCI itself, nearly a third of all Americans who are diagnosed with lung cancer are nonsmokers.[2] So what does the government's obsessive anti-tobacco campaign for smoking cessation and prevention have to offer them? After all, you can't quit if you never started (or have already quit).

That's why it was such a disaster when government scientists made a political decision (which I sadly had to witness) 30 years ago to focus only on "behavioral modification" for misguided smokers. It left real science frozen in the past, with little or no support or interest for developing better lung cancer screening, treatments, and even prevention.

In fact, a recent panel convened by NCI itself concluded that the only real strategy for "controlling cancer" is to finally focus on prevention, since mainstream treatment and screening (early detection) strategies have been such a failure. Cancer screening statistics are routinely trotted out to create the illusion of progress while, in fact, the "war on cancer" is a stalemate reminiscent of the deadly trench warfare of World War I.

Cancer cures hiding in plain sight

The sad truth is that there are many natural products hiding in plain sight that appear to be effective at

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NEWS BRIEF

The mental mineral that can make your brain younger

Cognitive impairment, ranging from mild dementia to Alzheimer's disease, is rampant in the U.S. Not surprisingly, Big Pharma is all over this issue. But so far dementia drugs have not been blockbuster successes.

While the drug industry dithers and goes back to the drawing board, fortunately there are many natural approaches to keeping the brain healthy—including the often overlooked mineral magnesium.

New research shows that magnesium deficiency in adults may play a significant role in the development of dementia. And a recent study found that giving magnesium to lab animals in the late stages of Alzheimer's disease reduced their cognitive impairment. In fact, it even restored their aging brains to a more youthful condition.[1]

Although this study wasn't done on humans, it does reveal an all-important mechanism by which cognitive decline can be reversed. Adequate levels of magnesium in the body appear to prevent the loss of brain synapses. Which are critical for memory and other mental functioning.

Another recent clinical trial on humans further explores these findings. Researchers found that the study participants who took magnesium had significantly better cognitive function and decreased symptoms of cognitive impairment than people who didn't.

So should you be taking a magnesium supplement? Most likely yes. Dairy, eggs, and meat are rich dietary sources of magnesium, and leafy green vegetables, nuts, seeds, and whole grains also contain the mineral. But your body only absorbs about 30 to 40 percent of the magnesium you eat.[2] Consequently, researchers estimate that as much as 68 percent of U.S. adults are magnesium deficient.[3]

There are other factors that also deprive you of this much-needed mineral. While drinking coffee and organic green tea in moderation can have health benefits, the caffeine can contribute to magnesium depletion. And as you grow older, your body can lose its magnesium stores. This is yet another potential problem with consuming green teas (see page 1 this issue).

With all of this—and the new research—in mind, I'm convinced that magnesium supplementation is important for healthy aging. Look for a supplement that has 200 to 400 mg of magnesium. However, it's difficult to get enough of this essential mineral from supplements alone, so make sure to also eat the magnesium-rich foods listed above.

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preventing and treating cancer. Yet they're ignored by the mainstream for two reasons. First, because they cannot be given as drugs (and rake in massive profits for Big Pharma). And second, because they modify the growth of cancer cells and tumors instead of killing them outright.

You see, when the government screens natural products for "anticancer" activity, it looks only for the ability to *kill* cancer cells. But unfortunately, chemicals that can kill cancer cells will also kill your normal cells, which has led to the tragic and unnecessary disaster of cancer chemotherapy today.

But there are other important types of anticancer activity, including preventing new blood vessels from supporting the growth of malignant tumors (anti-angiogenesis), boosting the immune system to naturally eliminate cancer cells, transforming cancer cells back to "normal" cells, and other proven mechanisms.

And yet, because of the bias in the cancer industry, natural products that effectively address these issues aren't able to make the leap from laboratory studies to hugely expensive human cancer treatment trials.

And the new kava study is just one example.

A worry-free treatment for lung cancer

Kava (*Piper methysticum*) has long been used in Hawaii, Samoa, and other parts of Polynesia as an effective anti-anxiety agent. U.S. presidents ranging from Lyndon Johnson to Bill Clinton have sampled kava drinks during their "goodwill" trips to American Samoa. What's more, the herb is a member of the pepper family, which is known for its anticancer activities. *Piper nigrans*, or black pepper, contains piperine, which research has shown to be a very potent anticancer natural ingredient.[3]

But kava has met with its share of controversy. About 10 years ago, there was a "scare" about possible liver toxicity associated with the herb. At the time, I was the editor of the medical journal *Seminars in Integrative Medicine*. So I invited and published an article from my colleague Jorg Gruenwald in Germany that showed there was no real evidence against kava. Instead, Dr. Gruenwald demonstrated that drugs were likely responsible for the cases of liver toxicity originally attributed to kava.

In Fiji, the rate of lung cancer diagnosis is only 5 to 10 percent of the U.S. rate. That's a 10-to-20-time reduction...potentially just from using kava!

For the kava lung cancer study, researchers gave mice a kava-derived dietary supplement on a daily basis. As I noted above, this supplement prevented formation of 99 percent of tumors.

Some mice actually developed no tumors at all. And the type of DNA effects typically associated with heavy tobacco use were also significantly reduced. In addition, there was no liver toxicity in the mice that were given kava.

This lab evidence supports the long-held observation that people living in the South Pacific have dramatically lower rates of lung cancer. Despite comparable rates of tobacco use, incidences of cancer in Fiji, Vanuatu, and Western Samoa are much lower than in countries where the people don't regularly consume kava. In fact, in Fiji, the rate of lung cancer diagnosis is only 5 to 10 percent of the U.S. rate.[1] That's a 10-to-20-time reduction in lung cancer, potentially just from using kava!

The amazing bottom line: Kava can **reduce** the risk of lung cancer as much or more than cigarette smoking is said to increase it.

A look ahead

The results from the new kava study are so striking that the American Botanical Council (ABC) issued a press release about it in January. Normally, ABC, which is a nonprofit organization devoted to evidence-based herbal medicine, focuses its efforts on educating the media and the public about the results of human clinical trials. But this study was so groundbreaking that ABC made an exception, hoping to focus more human clinical research toward the modern crisis of lung cancer.

Of course, the University of Minnesota research team doesn't think any of the commercially available kava supplements currently on the market would be effective against cancer. Although that could have something to do with the fact that they're working on developing their own (patented) kava-derived drugs.

But there's no harm in trying kava. To find an appropriate dose for your particular needs, consult a knowledgeable health practitioner who is open to natural approaches.

One thing to note: Kava doesn't cause liver toxicity as long as it's not taken with potentially liver-damaging drugs like acetaminophen (Tylenol). But it does have a natural relaxing effect. So it's best to take at night. IC

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Thyroid cancer scare tactics are on the rise

I've written often about the overdiagnosis and overtreatment epidemic created by the cancer industry. This overzealous approach causes totally unnecessary health risks and skyrocketing healthcare costs. Colonoscopies, mammograms, and skin and prostate cancer tests have all led to the overdiagnosis problem. And now a recent report adds another overdiagnosed "cancer" to the list: thyroid cancer.

Researchers from the Mayo Clinic published an analysis in August 2013 stating that new imaging techniques can detect thyroid nodules so small, they're the size of a pinhead.[1] (Technology has not yet progressed so far as to determine how many angels are dancing on it, but they're working on it).

Technically, many of these nodules are diagnosed as "cancer." So according to the Mayo Clinic's report, the number of U.S. thyroid cancer cases has tripled over the past three decades. From 3.6 cases per 100,000 people in 1973 to 11.6 cases per 100,000 people in 2009. As a result, thyroid cancer is one of the fastest-growing cancer diagnoses in America.

But consider this: The U.S. death rate for thyroid cancer has remained steady at 0.5 fatalities per 100,000 people diagnosed.[1]

Thyroid cancer is another example of a cancer in which the number of supposed new cases is growing wildly, yet the mortality rate remains the same (see "The business of cancer" in the December 2013 issue of *Insiders' Cures*). This allows the political science generals of the "war on cancer" to claim a false victory. Trumpeting their "success" at stabilizing mortality rates. Despite rapidly increasing numbers of new cases.

Thyroid cancer is another example of a cancer in which the number of supposed new cases is growing wildly, yet the mortality rate remains the same

But if we were really winning the war on cancer, mortality rates would be going down. What stagnant mortality rates actually indicate is that most of these newly detected cases are not really cancer at all. The vast majority of these cases are actually small, low-risk, papillary thyroid tumors. And despite our fear of the word "tumor," these growths are highly unlikely to ever progress to cause any symptoms, let alone fatalities.

But the cancer industry has become expert at diagnosing and treating non-cancer. After all, health insurance policies reimburse physicians well for frequent, routine use of sophisticated screening techniques like MRIs, CT scans, and portable ultrasound devices.

As with most of modern medicine, new medical technologies are leading the charge (and charges). Dr. Damian Dupuy, director of tumor ablation at Rhode Island Hospital and professor of diagnostic imaging at Brown University's medical school, recently pointed out to Medscape Medical News that ultrasound cancer screening has become so inexpensive that doctors can test virtually every patient.[2]

"Are you helping [patients] by doing that?" he asked. "No, but if you can charge for it, you're helping your own pocketbook…It's the fee-for-service model that is pushing testing, follow-up, and biopsy because you get paid to do that."

So now new technology is allowing doctors to practice "pinhead" medicine on thyroid nodules that never grow nor metastasize and would never harm the patient. When they should really be focusing on thyroid tumors that are actually cancerous and dangerous. Fortunately, these are relatively rare.

How can you counteract this overdiagnosis and overtreatment?

Unfortunately, there's not much research or research funding regarding natural approaches to preventing or treating thyroid cancer. But you can watch for potential risk factors like family history, exposure to radiation, or lack of iodine in the diet, which stimulates thyroid cells to grow. Seafood is an excellent and healthy source of iodine (see "The dangerous deficiency no one is talking about" in the October 2012 issue of *Insiders' Cures*).

In addition, keep an eye on your neck. The thyroid gland is very close to the surface of the neck and can easily be felt. So check your neck for any changes when you're shaving or

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putting on makeup in the morning. This is particularly important if you're feeling unexplainably hyper or sluggish, which could indicate a thyroid issue.

Make sure your doctor always examines your neck and thyroid when you go in for a physical. And always consult your doctor if you have any questions or concerns about a neck mass or possible thyroid tumor.

Of course, you can—and should—be doing everything you can to prevent ANY type of cancer from occurring. For complete details on the best natural approaches for preventing cancer, see my special report *The "One Word" Battle Plan to Crushing Cancer.* (If you don't still have the copy you received when you subscribed to *Insiders' Cures*, you can download and view this report for free by logging in to the Subscriber page of my website, www.drmicozzi.com.)

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NEWS BRIEF

What you need to know about NSAIDs

For mainstream medicine, figuring out how to effectively treat pain can be a real…pain.

This is especially true when doctors persist in ignoring all of the natural approaches for pain management, and slavishly comply with all of the political prohibitions placed on effective pain relievers by big government regulators and armed law enforcement. Suddenly, these doctors find they don't have many good options left. So it's no surprise that their desperate patients turn to over-the-counter pain remedies like ibuprofen and even the poisonous, putative pain reliever Tylenol.

I've warned you many times before to never take Tylenol (acetaminophen) for any reason. This supposedly "safe" pain reliever remains the leading cause of liver failure in the U.S. Alternatively, I've found ibuprofen drugs like Advil and Motrin to be effective pain relievers when nothing else works.

The key is to be vigilant against these drugs' alarming side effects, and to carefully monitor your dosages.

Ibuprofen, along with aspirin, naproxen (Aleve), and a whole host of prescription drugs, is part of a class of pain relievers known as NSAIDs (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs). Many of these drugs came onto the scene during the 1980s and were quickly accepted by people seeking pain relief.

However, NSAIDS are associated with dangerous side effects in the gastrointestinal tract, including ulcers, bleeding, and colon perforations. These drugs can wreak havoc all the way through the average 26-foot length of the GI tract. That's a lot of territory for damage to occur.

Alarmingly, these problems are not rare. In fact, about 1 to 2 percent of routine NSAID users experience GI complications that are so severe, they have to be hospitalized.[1] And if you're older than 65, have a history of peptic ulcers, take NSAIDS and anticoagulants at the same time, or pop an NSAID when you're taking a daily aspirin, you may be particularly susceptible to these complications.

The good news is, at recommended doses, ibuprofen is the least likely of the NSAIDs to cause these side effects. But while you don't want to take too much of this painkiller, you also don't want to take too little.

Ibuprofen is still available as a prescription pain reliever, and an effective dose is considered to be one or two 800 mg tablets. Compare that to the puny 200 mg in the Advil or Motrin tablets you buy at the drug store. I've found that when ibuprofen does not provide fast, effective pain relief, it's often because the doses in these over-the-counter products are simply too low.

Of course, I always recommend trying natural pain relievers first (see "The problem with pain" in the July 2012 issue of Insiders' Cures). But if you choose to use NSAIDs, make sure to let your doctor know. You should also keep an eye out for signs of GI bleeding, including dark stools or blood in your toilet.

And remember, if you're concerned that you may have GI bleeding, you don't necessarily need a colonoscopy. There are safe, effective, and convenient tests for detecting GI bleeding without the risks, costs, and discomfort of a colonoscopy (see "The hidden, grisly dangers of 'routine' colonoscopies" in the September 2013 issue of *Insiders' Cures*). Ask your doctor about the alternatives.

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