

## **New ACP Guidelines for Treatment of Acute Non Low Back Pain- Topical NSAIDs First-Line Therapy**

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The American College of Physicians (ACP) and American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP) recommend topical nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory agents (NSAIDs) as the first-line of therapy for non-low back pain. Physicians should encourage adults to use NSAIDs, particularly topical ones, to treat acute non-low back pain that stems from musculoskeletal injuries, according to the new guidelines.<sup>1</sup>

Acute pain from non-low back musculoskeletal injuries includes strains and sprains lasting 4 weeks or less.<sup>2</sup> The first-line recommendation to treat patients with topical NSAIDs is a strong recommendation with moderate certainty evidence.<sup>3</sup>

In a network meta-analysis of RCTs in patients with acute pain from non-low back musculoskeletal injuries NSAIDs proved to have the greatest net benefit, followed by oral NSAIDs and acetaminophen with or without diclofenac.<sup>2</sup> Moderate-certainty evidence showed that compared with placebo, topical NSAIDs (WMD, 1.66 cm [CI, 1.16 to 2.16 cm]) were the most effective treatment in improving physical function.<sup>2</sup>

In addition, high-certainty evidence showed that compared with placebo, only topical NSAIDs (OR, 5.20 [CI, 2.03 to 13.33]; RD, 34%) demonstrated a statistically significant increase in the likelihood of treatment satisfaction.<sup>2</sup> It was also determined that compared with placebo, moderate-certainty evidence showed that topical NSAIDs alone was the most effective treatment for symptom relief.

Topical NSAIDs have shown a magnitude of effect against placebo similar to that of oral NSAIDs, without the gastrointestinal adverse events associated with oral NSAIDs.<sup>2</sup> In addition, the analysis showed that no intervention caused any statistically significant dermatologic-related harm compared with placebo.<sup>2</sup>

In conclusion, patients and clinicians can choose from several treatment options to address acute pain from non-low back musculoskeletal injuries.<sup>2</sup> In the new evidence based guideline it was determined that physicians should use topical NSAIDs as first line therapy this was strongly recommended and had moderate-certainty evidence compared to the other options.

## References

1. Miller J. The ACP, AAFP recommend NSAIDs as first-line therapy for non-low back pain. Healio 2020.
2. Busse JW, etc. . Management of Acute Pain from Non–Low Back Musculoskeletal Injuries. Ann Intern Med 2020 doi:10.7326/M19-3601
3. ACP Internist. ACP, AAFP issue joint guideline on non-low back pain from musculoskeletal injuries in adults. ACP Internist and American College of Physicians 2020.  
<https://acpinternist.org/weekly/archives/2020/08/18/3.htm>