

Can you use anti-inflammatory drugs when you are infected with COVID-19?

IN THE NEWS

The French minister of Health Olivier Véran, who is a medical doctor, announced on Twitter that people who have been infected with COVID-19 should not use anti-inflammatory drugs, like ibuprofen, because it could worsen their symptoms. Is this claim founded, or is it a rumor?

WHERE DID THIS NEWS COME FROM?

Véran wrote this announcement after he saw a study on people infected with the new virus, who also have high blood pressure and/or diabetes (1). Because of the medicine they need, like certain antihypertensives, these people have more of a specific protein (ACE2) on their cell membranes. It looks like coronaviruses need this specific protein to be able to infect cells. This is all the study found. Some researchers now reason that certain drugs might possibly aggravate the corona-infection, but this has not been studied.

Anti-inflammatory drugs have a similar effect on body cells. That is why the French authorities advise against the use of these drugs when you have a fever. A fever could indicate a corona-infection. However, anti-inflammatory drugs should never be a first choice when treating a fever. You need to use an antipyretic, like paracetamol.

SOURCE

(1) Fang L, Karakiulis G, Roth M. Are patients with hypertension and diabetes mellitus at increased risk for COVID-19 infection? *Lancet Resp Med* 2020. March 11, 2020DOI:[https://doi.org/10.1016/S2213-2600\(20\)30116-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2213-2600(20)30116-8)

HOW TO INTERPRET THIS NEWS

The warnings against the use of anti-inflammatory drugs when you have been infected with the coronavirus, are premature and unfounded. There has only been one study with a small group of patients with COVID-19, where researchers suspect that certain drugs might aggravate the symptoms. However, they did not study this, they just questioned it. To this day, there is no evidence that anti-inflammatory drugs can aggravate an infection with the coronavirus.

Nurofen is a drug that is available for purchase at the pharmacy. Many people don't know, however, that this is not a simple painkiller, but a low-dosed anti-inflammatory drug. The first choice for treating fever is paracetamol.

People that have to take anti-inflammatory drugs because of other health issues do not have to panic. There is no connection between these drugs and the coronavirus.

CONCLUSION

There is a rumor that anti-inflammatory drugs might aggravate a corona-infection. This information was based on a study that drew premature conclusions without any evidence. Keeping this in mind, anti-inflammatories have no place in the treatment of a corona-infection. To treat fever, you only need an antipyretic like paracetamol. For more information, ask your pharmacist.

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