**PAINKILLER 'PERIL'**

**Over-the-counter painkillers including ibuprofen ‘increase risk of heart failure by 20%’**

**BY NICK MCDERMOTT**

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Major new research finds common painkillers may double risk of being hospitalised with heart problems

**COMMON painkillers used by millions can double the risk of ending up in hospital with heart failure, a major study warns.**

It found popping popular pills such as ibuprofen were bad for people’s tickers.

Researchers looked at the records of nearly ten million adults given non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs).

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They found the drugs raised the risk of being admitted for heart failure by an average of 19 per cent.

But high doses of diclofenac doubled the chances of being rushed to hospital, while even taking over-the-counter painkillers like ibuprofen raised risk by 18 per cent.

Experts warned the pills, which are used to treat ailments such as headaches, period pain, sprains, colds and flu, are not harmless.

Cardiology professor Gunnar Gislason, from Copenhagen University Hospital, said access to the drugs should be restricted.

He said: “Even a small increase in cardiovascular risk is a concern for public health.

“However, NSAIDs are still widely available over the counter… this practice further fuels the common misconception they are harmless drugs that are safe for everyone.”

Lead researcher Giovanni Corrao, from the University of Milano-Bicocca in Italy, said medics must consider the dangers before doling out the pills.

He warned “risk seems to vary between drugs and according to the dose.”

More than half a million Brits suffer with heart failure, which results in the heart struggling to pump blood around the body, and is the leading cause of hospital admissions for over-65s.

Victims struggle to breath and suffer swollen legs.

Professor Peter Weissberg, Medical Director at the British Heart Foundation, said:“It serves as a reminder to doctors to consider carefully how they prescribe NSAIDs, and to patients that they should only take the lowest effective dose for the shortest possible time.”

Helen Williams, from the Royal Pharmaceutical Society, said: “The link between use of NSAIDs and increased risk of heart failure is well-established.

“Reassuringly, use of the most commonly purchased NSAID – ibuprofen – was associated with a lower overall increased risk of hospitalisation due to heart failure when compared to the other medicines.

“The study reinforces the need to carefully weigh up the risks and benefits of using NSAIDs.”