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Elderly people who regularly take common painkillers such as ibuprofen are at increased risk of heart failure. New research analysed the effects of anti-inflammatory drugs given to 10 million people. But younger patients are unlikely to be affected, as our Medical Correspondent Fergus Walsh explains. For 40 years, Anne Nut, has struggled are rheumatoid arthritis. She needs medication to help her control chronic joint pain. Anne is prescribed diclofenac, but research says these, and similar pain killers, like ibuprofen and naproxen naproxen, increase the risk of heart failure. Now she faces a dilemma. Do I stop taking them and lose part of my independence? Or do I carry on taking them and, perhaps, put

myself at a greater risk? That's a decision that lots of us out there are going to have to make over the next few weeks. The researchers examined 27 non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs being taken on prescription by 10 million people in Europe. Overall, the drugs increase the risk of being admitted to hospital with heart failure by 19%, compared with those not taking them but the study did not show the underlying or absolute risk. All medicines have potential side effects. But the warnings from this research really only apply to the elderly. The average age of the people in this study was 77. For them, doctors need to be careful when prescribing pain killers. As always, it is balance between risk and benefit. A leading pharmacist sought to reassure the public. There is no need to panic.

Younger patients occasionally take these drugs, short courses, and there is no evidence this is a problem. Older patients are generally getting these drugs prescribed by their doctor and they are being monitored closely anyway. If people do have concerns they should speak to their GP or pharmacist. Ibuprofen and other anti-inflammatories are very effective medicines but for the elderly and those at risk of heart disease, they need to be used with care. Fergus Walsh, BBC News. A brief look at some of the day's other other news stories: