**Think before popping the pill! Common painkillers may increase risk of heart failure**

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LONDON: Common painkillers such as ibuprofen and diclofenac may lead to a significantly increased risk of heart failure, particularly in older adults, a new study has warned. 

The study analysed data for 10 million users from the UK, the Netherlands, Italy and Germany aged 77 on average, and compared them with people who did not take the drugs. 

The researchers, from University of Milano-Bicocca in Italy, found taking non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), such as ibuprofen, naproxen and diclofenac, increased the risk of being taken to hospital with heart failure by 19 per cent. 

Since most people in the study were older - and those on NSAIDs were, in general, in poorer health - experts said that the findings had little relevance for most under-65s but may be a concern for elderly patients. 

According to the British Heart Foundation (BHF), patients should be on the lowest dose possible of NSAIDs for the shortest possible time. 

"This large observational study reinforces previous research showing that some NSAIDs, a group of drugs commonly taken by patients with joint problems, increase the risk of developing heart failure," said Peter Weissberg, medical director at the BHF. 

The focus needed to be on older patients with conditions or diseases that might put them at increased risk of heart failure anyway, Helen Williams, consultant pharmacist for cardiovascular disease at the Royal Pharmaceutical Society, told the 'BBC'. 

"Hypertension, diabetes, maybe kidney problems - it's in those patients when we add these drugs on top that there might be a small increase in their risk," Williams said.

The study was published in the BMJ journal.  