Painkillers raise your risk of having a heart attack within one week

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Almost 15 million non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, such as ibuprofen and naproxen, were prescribed in England last year - and doctors are being asked to consider the risks

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Millions of people are increasing their risk of a [**heart attack**](http://www.mirror.co.uk/all-about/heart-attack) by taking painkillers, research reveals.

Experts say there is an added danger even within the first week of taking non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, such as ibuprofen and naproxen.

The highest risk was found to be in the first month of taking the pills and to those on a high daily dose – such as more than 1,200mg of ibuprofen, 750mg of naproxen and 25mg rofecoxib.

Researchers from Canada, Finland and Germany analysed data on 450,000 people, including 61,460 who had suffered a heart attack, and urged doctors to consider the risks before giving the commonly prescribed drugs.

The team’s study, published in The BMJ medical journal, found using the drugs for longer than one month did not increase risk more than with shorter use.

It also found the overall risk of a heart attack if taking celecoxib, ibuprofen, diclofenac, naproxen and rofecoxib rose between 24% and 58%, compared with not using these drugs.

The authors said: “Given that the onset of risk of acute myocardial infarction [heart attack]occurred in the first week and appeared greatest in the first month of treatment with higher doses, prescribers should consider the risks and benefits of NSAID.”

Dr Mike Knapton, of the [**British Heart Foundation**](http://www.mirror.co.uk/all-about/british-heart-foundation) , was alarmed by how quickly the risk set in.

He said: “Whether you’re prescribed ­painkillers like ibuprofen, or buy them, people must be made aware of the risk and alternative medication should be considered.”