

# Newsflash

Issue 2016.02

**According to ProCare Rx's analytics team, the drug inflation rates year-to-date are as follows:**

**ALL DRUGS 0.72%**  
**BRANDS 1.71%**  
**GENERICS -5.63%**  
**SPECIALTY 2.31%**

## Generic Releases

The following brand drugs have lost their patents:

Drug	Condition	Date
Exjade	IOS	Jan 26
Savella	Pain	Jan 27

While we have done extensive research on these dates, there is a possibility that any given date may change based on legal issues or patent challenges. If we become aware of any changes, we will update this chart in the next issue.

## Formulary Changes

For a complete list of formulary changes, please visit our website at <http://www.procarerx.com>

Drug	Condition	New Tier
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Previous issues of Newsflash can be viewed under "Publications" at: [www.ProCareRx.com](http://www.ProCareRx.com)

## OTC Pain Relievers: Use With Caution

Most of us don't think twice about swallowing a couple of over-the-counter (OTC) pain relievers for back pain, muscle aches, or a headache. But, in recent years, research has revealed that these OTC products are not as benign as we once thought, and that long-term and/or excessive use actually may cause harm.

Recommended guidelines for the use of these painkillers are changing. For example, earlier this year, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) urged physicians to discontinue prescribing and dispensing combination medications that contain more than 325 milligrams (mg) of acetaminophen per pill. The FDA determined that there is no additional benefit to patients who take larger doses of acetaminophen. The agency also noted that keeping doses lower could help prevent liver damage caused by accidental overdose of acetaminophen.

**Acetaminophen.** Many OTC medications contain acetaminophen, including most cold and pain medications currently in use. Over dosage of acetaminophen can lead to liver failure, and the risk is compounded by even moderate alcohol use. It's easy to take too much: For example, if you are taking two acetaminophen containing prescription pain medications, along with two *Extra Strength Tylenol*, you are getting way too much acetaminophen.

The maximum daily dose of acetaminophen for adults is 4,000 mg, according to the FDA. Examples of OTC medications that contain acetaminophen include *Nyquil*, *Dayquil*, *Tylenol*, and almost anything that says "aspirin free" pain relief. Reading labels and keeping track of the acetaminophen content of both prescription and OTC medications is critical.

The FDA's recommendation was specifically aimed at combination medications, such as *Vicodin*, which contains hydrocodone and acetaminophen, but your total acetaminophen intake should be monitored carefully. This is especially true if you take medications such as *Extra Strength Tylenol*, which contains 500 mg of acetaminophen in each tablet or capsule.

**Changes for aspirin use.** Acetaminophen isn't the only pain reliever getting a new set of usage guidelines. In May of last year, the FDA recommended against taking aspirin for primary prevention of cardiovascular events in people who have not had a stroke or heart attack and have no cardiovascular conditions (If you have heart disease, you still may be advised to take a daily aspirin.)

The recommendation against aspirin therapy for primary prevention marks a significant change in the way many physicians treat their patients. For many years, taking a low-dose aspirin (81 mg or less) every day was considered standard practice for anyone with heart disease risk factors, such as high blood pressure or high cholesterol.

With these new guidelines, it's even more important that you talk about the risks and benefits of aspirin use with your physician; never start taking daily aspirin on your own.

**Understand the risks.** The primary health risk associated with aspirin and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), such as ibuprofen (*Advil*, *Motrin*) and naproxen (*Aleve*), is bleeding. Your stomach and gastrointestinal tract are vulnerable to NSAID-related irritation.

If you are at high risk for bleeding or you take anti-coagulant medications, such as warfarin (*Coumadin*), exercise caution when taking aspirin or NSAIDs. The combination of drugs could lead to a serious bleeding event. Your bleeding risk can be predicted with several scoring systems that use information such as blood pressure, age, kidney and liver health, bleeding history, anemia, and previous stroke.

In terms of OTC pain relievers, if you are at low risk for bleeding, then two tabs (200 mg each) of ibuprofen can be taken two to three times a day, or one tab of naproxen (220 mg) twice a day. If you have heart disease and are on a baby aspirin daily, try to stick with acetaminophen, as both ibuprofen and naproxen can interfere with cardio protective effects of aspirin.



The following **New Drugs** were recently approved by the U.S. Food & Drug Administration and added to ProCare Rx's National formulary. Each drug will be reviewed at the next ProCare Rx's P&T Committee meeting.

Brand Name	Dose Form	FDA Approved Indication	Tier	P/A Specialty Medical
Adynovate (antihemophilic factor)	Injection	Treatment for hemophilia A	Tier 3	Prior Auth: No Specialty: No Medical: No
Adzenys XR-ODT (amphetamine)	Tablet	Treatment for ADHD	Tier 3	Prior Auth: No Specialty: No Medical: No
Cotellic (cobimetinib)	Tablet	Treatment for melanoma	Tier 3	Prior Auth: No Specialty: No Medical: No
Darzalex (daratumumab)	Injection	Treatment for multiple myeloma	Tier 3	Prior Auth: No Specialty: No Medical: No
Emverm (mebendazole)	Tablet	Treatment for pinworm	Tier 3	Prior Auth: No Specialty: No Medical: No
Genvoya (elvitegravir, cobicista, emtricitabine, and tenofovir alafenamide)	Tablet	Treatment for HIV	Tier 3	Prior Auth: No Specialty: No Medical: No
Narcan (naloxone)	Nasal Spray	Treatment for opioid overdose	Tier 3	Prior Auth: No Specialty: No Medical: No
Nucala (mepolizumab)	Injection	Treatment for severe asthma	Tier 3	Prior Auth: No Specialty: No Medical: No
Onzetra Xsail (sumatriptan)	Intranasal	Treatment for migraine	Tier 3	Prior Auth: No Specialty: No Medical: No
Otiprio (ciprofloxacin otic suspension)	Otic Suspension	Treatment of pediatric patients with bilateral otitis	Tier 3	Prior Auth: No Specialty: No Medical: No
Portrazza (necitumumab)	Injection	Treatment for non-small cell lung cancer	Tier 3	Prior Auth: No Specialty: No Medical: No
Tagrisso (osimertinib)	Tablet	Treatment for non-small cell lung cancer	Tier 3	Prior Auth: No Specialty: No Medical: No
Uptravi (selexipag)	Tablet	Treatment for pulmonary hypertension	Tier 3	Prior Auth: No Specialty: No Medical: No
Zembrace SysTouch (sumatriptan)	Injection	Treatment for acute migraine	Tier 3	Prior Auth: No Specialty: No Medical: No
Zepatier (elbasvir and grazoprevir)	Tablet	Treatment for hepatitis C Genotypes 1 and 4	Tier 3	Prior Auth: No Specialty: No Medical: No
Zurampic (lesinurad)	Tablet	Treatment for gout	Tier 3	Prior Auth: No Specialty: No Medical: No

## Heart Benefits of a Hearty Laugh

Laughter is contagious. But don't worry about spreading it around. Growing research suggests that regularly getting your giggles going offers several health benefits beyond the emotional ones. Specifically, laughing appears to:

**Increase blood flow.** Researchers at the University of Maryland Medical Center measured the blood-moving capacity of arteries after volunteers watched humorous or stressful films. After volunteers laughed through scenes from "There's Something About Mary" their arteries expanded, but they constricted after viewing battle scenes from "Saving Private Ryan." And in a small one-year study of heart-attack patients, those who watched comedies for 30 minutes a day were less likely to suffer a second heart attack than those who did not watch funny videos.

**Lower blood sugar.** People with type 2 diabetes maintain better blood sugar control after watching comic performances, research suggests. A Japanese study of 10 people with the condition suggests that might stem from beneficial changes in immune regulation that prevent damaging inflammation from undermining blood-sugar control.

**Regulate the immune system.** In another small study, laughter significantly reduced levels of inflammation-triggering cytokines in people with rheumatoid arthritis. Other research suggests that after viewing humorous films, people with asthma became more resistant to flare-ups, those with allergies suffer fewer symptoms, and children with allergic skin rashes sleep more easily. A good laugh might also stimulate production of disease-fighting T cells and natural killer cells.

**Burn calories.** Laughing boosts energy expenditure by 10 to 20 percent, according to Vanderbilt University researchers. They calculated that 15 minutes of hearty laughter could burn up to 40 calories, enough to shed 4 pounds a year.

**Ease pain.** Laughter contracts and relaxes muscles in the abdomen, face, and shoulders, which might ease muscle tension and spasms that contribute to pain. And the temporary distraction helps too.

**Recommendation.** While 4-year-olds laugh about every 4 minutes, adults do it about once an hour. So spend time each day having fun. Trade jokes, watch comedies, horse around with your kids or grandkids, or share a laugh while in line at the grocery store. It will brighten your day – and maybe provide a much-appreciated dose of mirthful medicine.