**READING COMPREHENSION EXERCISE,p.12**

Chronic Pain: OTC (over-the-counter) or Prescription Medicine?

WebMD Feature

By Jim Brown

1 If you are one of the millions of Americans who suffers from [chronic pain](http://www.webmd.com/pain-management/ss/slideshow-chronic-pain-myths-facts), you have more options than ever to treat the pain. Your choices range from simple remedies such as an ice pack or heating pad to more complex treatments like surgery.

4 Somewhere in between these [pain management](http://www.webmd.com/pain-management/default.htm) options are medications: over-the-counter (OTC) medication and [prescription drugs](http://www.webmd.com/drugs/index-drugs.aspx). And while an [aspirin](http://www.webmd.com/drugs/mono-3-ASPIRIN+-+ORAL.aspx?drugid=1082&drugname=Aspirin+Oral) or two might be the best way to knock out a [headache](http://www.webmd.com/migraines-headaches/default.htm) or ease low [back pain](http://www.webmd.com/back-pain/default.htm), a stronger prescription drug may be needed to relieve long-term, severe pain.

8 More choices mean more decisions. Should you always use an OTC drug first? Should you get a prescription for something stronger? Or should you call your doctor and get his or her input first?

When Should You Use an OTC?

12The answer to the first question depends on a few factors, according to Beth Minzter, MD, a [pain management](http://www.webmd.com/pain-management/ss/slideshow-reasons-for-pain) specialist at Cleveland Clinic.

14"An over-the-counter drug might make sense if a person has [osteoarthritis](http://www.webmd.com/osteoarthritis/default.htm) of the [knee](http://www.webmd.com/pain-management/knee-pain/picture-of-the-knee) and it occasionally hurts more than usual. But it might also be appropriate for that same person to take a stronger prescription drug," she says. The decision depends on if the drug is helping, how regularly you are using it, and the severity of side effects, Minzter tells WebMD.

19[OTC pain relievers](http://www.webmd.com/pain-management/safe-otc-drug-use-9/safe-pain-relief) are commonly used for [arthritis](http://www.webmd.com/arthritis/default.htm) pain, [headaches](http://www.webmd.com/migraines-headaches/ss/slideshow-migraine-overview), [back pain](http://www.webmd.com/back-pain/ss/slideshow-back-pain-myths), sore muscles, and [joint pain](http://www.webmd.com/pain-management/guide/joint-pain). Aspirin, [ibuprofen](http://www.webmd.com/drugs/mono-9368-IBUPROFEN+-+ORAL.aspx?drugid=5166&drugname=ibuprofen+oral) ( [Advil](http://www.webmd.com/drugs/2/drug-6143/advil+oral/details), [Motrin](http://www.webmd.com/drugs/mono-9368-IBUPROFEN+-+ORAL.aspx?drugid=4387&drugname=motrin+oral) IB), and [naproxen](http://www.webmd.com/drugs/mono-1289-NAPROXEN+-+ORAL.aspx?drugid=5173&drugname=Naproxen+Oral) sodium ( [Aleve](http://www.webmd.com/drugs/mono-1289-NAPROXEN+-+ORAL.aspx?drugid=1098&drugname=Aleve+Oral)) are nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs ( [NSAIDs](http://www.webmd.com/arthritis/features/pain-relief-how-nsaids-work)).

20"Nonsteroidal drugs are extremely effective because they reduce swelling and relieve pain," Minzter says. "If you have a bad [shoulder](http://www.webmd.com/pain-management/picture-of-the-shoulder) that occasionally gets to the point where you cannot [sleep](http://www.webmd.com/sleep-disorders/default.htm), a NSAID might be great on a short-term basis. But if that shoulder hurts all the time, it is reasonable to ask your doctor -- in a non-urgent manner -- about switching to a long-acting drug that would give you around-the-clock pain relief."

25"Just because one NSAID doesn’t work, it doesn’t mean a different NSAID won’t work, either," says Minzter. "Nonsteroidals are very patient-specific. Different people have different reactions."

Taken from: [http://www.webmd.com/pain-management/recurring-pain-11/when-to-call-doctor?page=1](about:blank)

I. Now, answer the following questions regarding the text:

1. When do we usually use over-the-counter medication and prescription drugs?

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2. What are the factors that determine when to use an OTC or a prescription medicine?

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3. Which are some of the most common nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs?

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II. Extra: Discussion questions.

Get in groups of 3-4 students and discuss the following questions. You don't need to write down your answers but be prepared to expose your views to the class afterwards.

* What are some of the problems associated with the use of an OTC or prescription drug?
* Is there any risk for the patient of becoming addicted to some of these types of medicines?
* Have you ever bought OTC medication? And why?