

**LC**<sup>TM</sup>  
LUKE COUTINHO



**YOUR 101 GUIDE TO MANAGE THE  
SIDE-EFFECTS OF PAINKILLERS**

When was the last time you reached for a painkiller without a second thought? Maybe it was for a nagging headache, sore back, or just to get through a stressful day. You're not alone—most people turn to these medications as a quick, easy fix for discomfort. But if we're honest, how often do we stop to think about what all those little pills could be doing to our bodies?

In some cases, pain relief is a necessity. People dealing with chronic inflammatory conditions, recurring flare-ups, and those who may have undergone surgery or experienced serious injuries, often need medication to manage their day-to-day lives. But what about the times when we're just self-medicating without medical advice? A couple of pills here and there might seem harmless on the surface. But over time, the frequent use of these painkillers can put a strain on our kidneys, liver, and other organs in ways we don't always realize.

In our own practice, we meet more and more young people showing signs of kidney damage linked to regular, unsupervised painkiller use. Imagine being 18 or 20 and dealing with the side effects of medications you thought were harmless. It's becoming all too common. Does this mean people who are genuinely on pain medications need to be scared? No.

This isn't about scare tactics. Instead, it's about understanding how to use painkillers safely. In situations where pain relief is essential, there are ways to manage and reduce the side effects. But if you're someone who reaches for a pill without much thought, maybe it's time to reassess that behavior.



## **Decoding The Impact of Painkillers on Kidney Health**

Pain management is a crucial aspect of healthcare, especially for patients dealing with chronic pain conditions. However, the long-term use of certain painkillers, particularly non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) and opioids—especially without medical supervision—can lead to serious, cumulative health risks, particularly for organs like the kidneys. **The National Kidney Foundation** reports that long-term use of NSAIDs (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs) is linked to a 32% increase in kidney disease, affecting even younger populations.

At Team Luke, we have created this guide to help you find a balance, stay in control of your health, avoid the overuse of painkillers, and in genuine cases that need pain medications, learn how to manage the use and side effects of painkillers without putting your body at risk.

But first, before we discuss the simple lifestyle changes and nutritional tips that can help combat these risks, let's explore the mechanisms by which painkillers can damage the kidneys.



## **Understanding The Mechanisms of Kidney Damage from Painkillers**

Healthy kidneys produce a chemical called prostaglandins that helps protect them from damage.

However, overusing painkillers can lower the levels of prostaglandins in the body, which may lead to kidney damage with long-term use.

**NSAIDs:** Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) or medications such as ibuprofen and naproxen, work by inhibiting cyclooxygenase (COX) enzymes, which are involved in the formation of prostaglandins. Prostaglandins play a vital role in maintaining renal blood flow and GFR (glomerular filtration rate). Long-term NSAID use can lead to decreased renal perfusion or blood flow, especially in individuals with pre-existing kidney conditions or dehydration.

**Opioids:** While opioid use is less directly linked to kidney damage compared to NSAIDs, they can lead to complications such as constipation, which may indirectly affect kidney function. Additionally, the use of opioids may contribute to the under-treatment of pain/inadequate pain management in patients with chronic kidney disease.

**One common effect between the two classes of painkillers however is dehydration.**

Yes, NSAIDs and opioids can contribute to dehydration, exacerbating kidney strain and leading to acute kidney injury.

Now that you have briefly understood the science behind how painkillers can affect your kidneys, it's time to move to solution mode.

How can lifestyle changes play a role in managing your kidney health after painkiller use? Let's discuss.

### **Nutritional and Lifestyle Tips for Kidney Health**

If your health condition requires you to be on painkillers, several lifestyle changes can help promote and protect your kidney health. Here are some of them.



#### **1. Water may be your best friend.**

Maintain adequate fluid intake. Staying well-hydrated is crucial for kidney function. Drinking water throughout the day helps kidneys flush out waste products effectively. It's usually recommended to consume at least eight to 10 cups of water daily, but individual needs can vary based on activity level and health conditions.

*Please note: If you have an existing kidney condition or are on water restriction, please speak to your doctor or primary healthcare provider to understand what may work for you.*

**ALSO READ:** [Are You Drinking Water Right or Wrong? Find Out](#)



## 2. Eat clean.

- **Embrace anti-inflammatory foods:** Incorporate foods rich in antioxidants to reduce inflammation and support kidney health like:
  - **Fruits:** Berries (blueberries, strawberries), cherries, and apples, among others.
  - **Vegetables:** Leafy greens (spinach, kale), bell peppers, and cruciferous vegetables (broccoli, Brussels sprouts).
  - **Healthy fats:** Olive oil, avocado, and omega-3 fatty acids found in fatty fish (salmon, sardines)
- **Limit salt and processed foods:** High sodium intake can lead to hypertension, which is detrimental to kidney health. Focus on fresh, whole foods, and limit processed foods that are high in salt.
- **Keep your protein intake moderate:** High protein meals can put additional strain on the kidneys, especially for individuals with preexisting kidney issues. Generally, it's advised to consume moderate amounts of protein, focusing on high-quality sources such as lean meats, fish, legumes, nuts, and seeds.



## 3. Identify and fix the vitamins and minerals that the painkillers may be depleting.

Long-term use of painkillers, especially NSAIDs, may also lead to the depletion of certain vitamins and minerals. Here's a look into these and top food sources.

- **Magnesium:** Chronic use of NSAIDs has been associated with decreased magnesium levels, a mineral crucial for many bodily functions, including muscle and nerve function. **Food sources:** Include leafy greens, nuts (especially almonds and cashews), seeds, whole grains, and legumes in your nutrition to replenish magnesium levels.



- **Vitamin D:** Opioid use can affect Vitamin D metabolism, leading to deficiencies, which are linked to kidney health. **Food sources:** Fatty fish (salmon, mackerel), ethically sourced dairy products, and free-range eggs (especially yolks) are good sources of Vitamin D. Sunlight exposure also plays a significant role in **Vitamin D** synthesis.



- **Calcium:** NSAIDs can also affect calcium absorption. **Food Sources:** Incorporate ethically sourced dairy products (like yogurt and cheese), green leafy vegetables, and plant-based milk to ensure adequate calcium intake.



#### 4. Think beyond nutrition. Work on all pillars of your lifestyle.

- **Regular exercise:** Engaging in regular physical activity helps maintain a healthy weight, reduces inflammation, and improves cardiovascular health, which in turn supports kidney function. Remember everything in your body is interconnected. Do not overtrain or undertrain. Adopt a personalized regimen that works for your unique needs and body type. Keep your workouts holistic with a balance of cardio, resistance, strength, flexibility, and endurance training.

#### ALSO READ:

- [Try These 10 Bodyweight Exercises to Build Lean Muscle](#)
- [Try The Most Inexpensive And Fastest Ways To Get Your Move On With N.E.A.T](#)



- **Nix smoking and curb excessive alcohol consumption:** Yes, these can negatively impact kidney health. Studies show that smoking damages blood vessels and reduces blood flow to the kidneys, impairing their function. This damage increases the risk of chronic kidney disease (CKD) and worsens existing kidney conditions. Smoking is also linked to proteinuria (excess protein in urine), which is an early indicator of kidney damage and a risk factor for kidney failure.

While moderate alcohol intake might not be harmful for everyone, excessive alcohol places significant stress on the kidneys. Alcohol is a diuretic, causing dehydration and making the kidneys work harder to maintain fluid balance. Chronic heavy drinking is associated with increased blood pressure, a major risk factor for kidney disease, and may lead to acute kidney injury, especially in cases of binge drinking. Research published in the **Clinical Journal of the American Society of Nephrology** shows that individuals with both habits have a higher risk of progressing from mild kidney damage to more severe stages, including kidney failure.

Limiting alcohol intake and quitting smoking can significantly reduce the risk of kidney damage.

**ALSO WATCH:** [7 Successful Ways To Quit Smoking](#)



- **Stress management:** Chronic stress may worsen pain and inflammation, potentially impacting kidney function. A study published in **Nature Reviews Nephrology** found that chronic stress-induced inflammation contributes to kidney dysfunction and may accelerate the progression of chronic kidney disease (CKD). Techniques such as mindfulness, yoga, deep breathing, and other relaxation techniques can help you manage your stress levels and overall well-being.

**ALSO TRY:**

- [A Guided Meditation By Luke For Effective Stress Relief](#)
- [Try Luke's 29 Days of Mindfulness Journey](#)



### **Catch up on ZZZ's**

Deep sleep is non-negotiable if you want to maintain the health of your kidneys. It is only in a state of deep sleep that your body regulates blood pressure, controls blood sugar, and reduces inflammation—all factors that directly impact kidney function. Sleep is the magical phase where hormonal balance, cleansing, and elimination of waste and toxins take place. Prioritize sleep hygiene and maintain a consistent sleep schedule to protect your kidney health in the long term.

#### **ALSO READ:**

- [Stop Making These 8 Sleep Mistakes](#)
- [Follow These Pre-bedtime Rituals For Deep And Sound Sleep](#)

### **The Final Word**

If you rely on painkillers regularly, especially NSAIDs or opioids, it's worth knowing that long-term use can take a toll on kidney health. Managing pain is crucial, but there are ways to support your body, especially through small lifestyle and nutritional changes that make a big difference for your kidneys. Whether it is staying adequately hydrated, incorporating anti-inflammatory foods, adopting healthy lifestyle practices, or replacing depleting nutrients through food sources — every little change can provide your body with what it needs to stay protected and maintain overall health.

It is critical to work closely with your healthcare providers to create an individualized and personalized plan that meets your unique needs—one that balances pain relief with kidney health. We hope each of you can benefit from these tips.

Last but not least, remember this. If you have been prescribed painkillers for the right reasons, have it with the faith and belief that it is going to work for you. Use that as an anchor in your subconscious mind because rejection in the mind means rejection in the body, whether it's food or medicine. Do this well.

---

Are you struggling to manage the side effects of your painkillers?

We help you find a way.

Reach out to our team by calling **1800 102 0253** or writing to us at [consults@lukecoutho.com](mailto:consults@lukecoutho.com).

---

**Disclaimer:** The information provided here is for educational and informational purposes only. It is not intended as a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always consult your healthcare provider before making changes to your nutrition, lifestyle, or healthcare regimen, especially if you have existing medical conditions or are taking prescribed medications.