



February 2nd, 2015

## It's All in Your Heart

In Canada, the death rate due to cardiovascular disease or incident has declined by more than 75% since 1952, but still a Canadian dies from heart disease or stroke every seven minutes. Understanding potential adverse effects of certain medications is important for heart health.

### NSAIDs – Pros and Cons

Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) are used to treat inflammation, pain, and fever, but they aren't risk-free. One concern is cardiovascular events, such as heart attack or stroke, and claims have been made that some NSAIDs are better than others. The fact is, all NSAIDs have this risk association and the best strategy is to minimize their use – especially if you already have cardiac issues.

One of the side-effects associated with non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) is an increased risk of bleeding. This can be particularly concerning in a patient who is already taking a blood thinner, such as those used to manage atrial fibrillation. Serious adverse events were reported with as little as 2 weeks of NSAID use. It is safer to consider other options for managing pain in these situations.

### Losing the Beat

Atrial fibrillation is a condition where the upper chambers of the heart don't beat properly, allowing blood to pool, coagulate, and, potentially, produce a life-threatening clot. Many people take fish oils or omega-3 supplements in the belief that they will help, however, a recent Canadian study has demonstrated no benefit of these oils in treating or preventing atrial fibrillation.

Regular caffeine consumption may reduce one's risk of atrial fibrillation! A study out of China has found this relationship, and, while they don't yet understand the process, they suspect it may be related to caffeine's anti-fibrosis properties – fibrosis plays a role in the development of AF. The study may lead to the development of drugs to better treat AF, but in the meantime, enjoy your Joe!

February is Heart Month; the little things you do daily can have a significant impact on your cardiovascular health. When you have questions, your pharmacist is there to help you find answers.