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## Coronavirus: What do we know about ibuprofen and COVID-19?

COMMENTS

By **Matthew Holroyd** (https://twitter.com/euronews) • last updated: 30/03/2020



Ibuprofen - Copyright Patrick Sison/AP

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An apparently anonymous WhatsApp voice in German has circulated widely on social media, fuelling debate on a key issue related to treatment of the new coronavirus.

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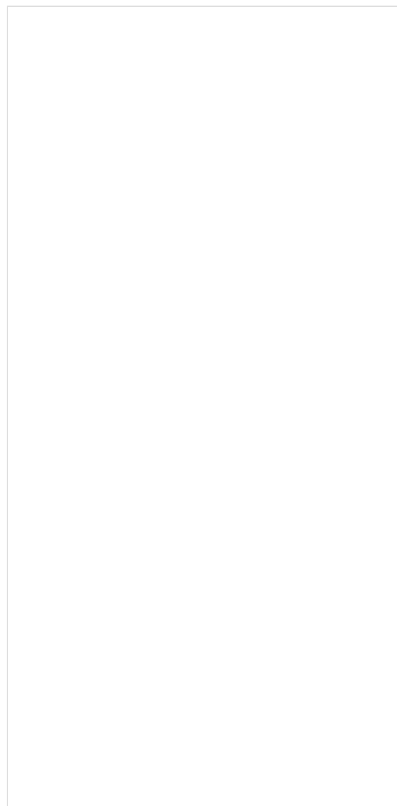
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A female voice claimed that her friend, a doctor at the university hospital in Vienna, had warned her that most patients with severe symptoms of COVID-19 had taken the well-known drug ibuprofen before they came to hospital.

The message sparked widespread rumours that painkillers like ibuprofen and aspirin accelerate the effects of the virus.

The Medical University of Vienna released a statement declaring that no research had taken place (<https://www.meduniwien.ac.at/web/en/about-us/news/detailsite/2020/news-im-maerz/alleged-research-results-of-the-wiener-uniklinik-around-the-covid-19-virus-are-fake-news/>) and that the text and voice messages were “fake news”.



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The Infectious Diseases Society of Ireland have also dispelled a false rumour (<https://twitter.com/IDSireland/status/1239251915516645377>) that four young people in Cork have suffered more severe effects of coronavirus after taking anti-inflammatory drugs.


But the discussion around the use of ibuprofen during the COVID-19 pandemic has continued.

A recent article in the medical journal, The Lancet (<https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanres/article/PIIS2213-26002030116-8/fulltext>), suggested that some drugs, including ibuprofen, might pose a risk for coronavirus patients who suffer from high blood pressure or diabetes.

Then the French Health Minister Olivier Veran, himself a qualified neurologist, warned that ibuprofen and other medicines known as Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs) increase the effects of the new coronavirus.

In a tweet, Veran said that “taking anti-inflammatory drugs [including ibuprofen] ...could be a factor in aggravating the infection”.

“In case of fever, take paracetamol. If you are already taking anti-inflammatory drugs or in case of doubt, ask your doctor for advice.”

 **Olivier Véran**  
@olivieveran

⚠️ [#COVID-19](#) | La prise d'anti-inflammatoires (ibuprofène, cortisone, ...) pourrait être un facteur d'aggravation de l'infection. En cas de fièvre, prenez du paracétamol. Si vous êtes déjà sous anti-inflammatoires ou en cas de doute, demandez conseil à votre médecin.

40K 12:38 PM - Mar 14, 2020

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His suggestion was criticised by some health experts, who argued that there is no public evidence available which links ibuprofen to more adverse effects of the coronavirus.

But Veran's recommendation came on the same day that the French government published a report, reiterating that "serious adverse effects" had been identified (<https://dgs-urgent.sante.gouv.fr/dgsurgent/inter/detailsMessageBuilder.do?id=30500%26cmd=visualiserMessage>) in patients afflicted with COVID-19, linked to the use of NSAIDs.

"As a reminder, the treatment of poorly tolerated fever or pain with COVID19 or any other respiratory virosis is based on paracetamol".

But Dr Muge Cevik, a researcher at the University of St Andrews Infection and Global Health Division, tweeted that she was "deeply concerned" about the bold statements.

"There is no scientific evidence I am aware of that ibuprofen cause[s] worse outcomes in COVID-19."


Meanwhile, the UK's National Health System(NHS) updated its advice to patients infected by coronavirus (<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/self-isolation-advice/>), instructing them to "take paracetamol to treat the symptoms".

### So what does the World Health Organization (WHO) say?

In a statement to Euronews, the WHO said they are "aware of concerns on the use of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, such as ibuprofen", but they are not recommending it for the treatment of fever for people with COVID-19".

WHO added they are quickly reviewing the reports and were not aware of a "published clinical or population-based data" on the matter.

"We are gathering further evidence on this issue before making a formal recommendation".


 **World Health Organization (WHO)**  
@WHO

Q: Could [#ibuprofen](#) worsen disease for people with [#COVID19](#)?

A: Based on currently available information, WHO does not recommend against the use of of ibuprofen.

At present, based on currently available information, WHO does not recommend against the use of of ibuprofen. We are also consulting with physicians treating COVID-19 patients and are not aware of reports of any negative effects of ibuprofen, beyond the usual known side effects that limit its use in certain populations. WHO is not aware of published clinical or population-based data on this topic.

**Could ibuprofen worsen disease for people with COVID-19?**



[#coronavirus](#) 18 March 2020

8,606 12:46 AM - Mar 19, 2020

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WHO continues to stress that there is no specific medicine recommended to prevent or treat COVID-19.

But the organisation said that antibiotics "only work on bacterial infections (<https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-coronaviruses>)".

“The WHO is helping to accelerate research and development efforts with a range of partners.”

So no link has yet been established between the use of ibuprofen and more severe symptoms of coronavirus.

Paracetamol is also being advised as an alternative pain-relief drug.

As with much of the outbreak, medical professionals are working quickly to ensure that fast, correct information is being distributed on appropriate channels.

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