



The Medical **Bulletin**

In Pain Management

How We Treat Acute Pain Could Be Wrong

In a surprising discovery that flies in the face of conventional medicine, McGill University researchers report that treating pain with anti-inflammatory medication, like ibuprofen or aspirin, may promote pain in the long term. The paper, published in *Science Translational Medicine*, suggests that inflammation, a normal part of injury recovery, helps resolve acute pain and prevents it from becoming chronic. Blocking that inflammation may interfere with this process, leading to harder-to-treat pain. "What we've been doing for decades not only appears to be wrong, but appears to be 180 degrees wrong, "You should not be blocking inflammation. You should be letting inflammation happen. That's what stops chronic pain." Changes in the blood cells and their activity seemed to be the most important factor, especially in cells called neutrophils." Neutrophils arrive early during inflammation, at the onset of injury — just when many of us reach for pain medication. This research suggests it might be better not to block inflammation, instead letting the neutrophils "do their thing." Taking an analgesic that alleviates pain without blocking neutrophils, like acetaminophen, may be better than taking an anti-inflammatory drug or steroid, says Mogil. THE data strongly suggests that neutrophils act like analgesics themselves, which is potentially useful in terms of analgesic development,"

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