



## **Sweaty She Monday (4/27/09): Ibuprofen – The New Vitamin**

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*Weekly Sweaty She postings can be found on “Sweaty She” on Facebook*

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Thanks to our active lifestyle, my husband and I have recently had issues requiring a constant dose of ibuprofen (pain in his ankle from a bike crash and pain/inflammation in my foot from plantar faciitis). In order to remember to take ibuprofen, we decided to keep the bottle on our vitamin shelf in the refrigerator. So our “new” supplement routine now consisted of ibuprofen along with a multi-vitamin, vitamin C, vitamin B complex, borage oil, magnesium electrolyte blend, liquid iron, vitamin E, and glucosamine/chondroitin. Heck, what are 3 more pills to the pile?

A few days later I really got to thinking about all the activities we do and all the required “support” (supplements, clothing, gear, food, ice packs...and ibuprofen) needed to stay “healthy”. Are we really staying healthy? Or just running ourselves into the ground at a very expensive rate?

According to the US Department of Health and Human Services (USDHHS), adults should get at least 2.5 hrs/week of various levels of physical activity to maintain health - recommending 30 min a day for 5 days, ideally at a moderate to high level of physical activity. So what about those of us who are physically active for 12-20+ hrs a week? After I consulted the USDHHS’s “Classification of Total Weekly Amounts of Aerobic Physical Activity”, this is what they have to say for a high level of physical activity exceeding more than 5 hours a week:

"Current science does not allow researchers to identify an upper limit of activity above which there are no additional health benefits."\*

How about we measure it in the amount of ibuprofen one has to take to keep physically fit? Exceed a certain amount of ibuprofen milligrams and you have cancelled out all the health benefits of exercise. We could even build a matrix that shows different values for taking ibuprofen for reducing inflammation versus alleviating pain AND cross reference it against the daily recommended intake of 1 caplet (200mg) every 4-6 hours versus prescription strength ibuprofen of 1 caplet (800mg) 2-3 times a day. Somehow I don’t think researchers would go for this as a truly viable study.

But I know plenty of very active people whose competitive side would quickly lead to comparisons over who is taking more ibuprofen. Gadget manufacturers would catch wind of demand, leading to Pez-like ibuprofen dispensers which can be mounted to bikes or

hooked onto race belts. Then the twigs and berries people would develop an “organic ibuprofen” which is much more “bio-available” than “regular” ibuprofen and the price would quickly double. A very slippery slope...but you get the idea.

As for the negative impact of taking ibuprofen? Warnings on the label include: stomach bleeding, allergic reaction, kidney issues, increase risk of heart attack or stroke – just to name a few. Heck, the negative impacts of riding your bike are similar. But from where I sit – and I do mean sit since I am sidelined from running for the time being – if ibuprofen is my ticket back to running the trails and roads, then I’ll keep it on my vitamin shelf and continue to “supplement” as much as and for as long as it takes!

*[\\*http://www.health.gov/paguidelines/guidelines/chapter1.aspx](http://www.health.gov/paguidelines/guidelines/chapter1.aspx)*