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Prevalence, attitudes, and behaviors related to the use of nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) in student athletes.

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PURPOSE: To describe NSAID use among football players and examine differences in attitudes and behaviors associated with reports of daily use. Data are from 681 self-administered questionnaires. Independent variables were race (white), insurance status (private), attitudes (whether NSAIDs helped performance), and behaviors (decided independently vs. asked an adult when to take an NSAID, what type, or dose; use of NSAIDs to treat pain vs. block pain). Among NSAID users, independent variables were entered into a logistic regression to determine their effects on the probability of daily use. Athletes were male, 90% white, mean age 15.8 years, and 88% had private insurance. Four-hundred-fifty-two (75%) used NSAIDs in the past 3 months, and 90 (15%) were daily users with no significant difference in age, race, or insurance between users and nonusers. Those who perceived better performance owing to NSAIDs (adjusted odds ratio [AOR] = 2.4), who decided on their own when to take NSAIDs (AOR = 2.2), and who used NSAIDs prophylactically were more likely to use daily NSAIDs (AOR = 2.5) after controlling for other variables in the model. NSAID use in high school football players is highly prevalent. Although package inserts caution against chronic use, nearly one of seven players uses NSAIDs daily. Daily users were more likely to decide independently and to use NSAID prophylactically, raising issues about the need for adult supervision and education of athletes regarding side effects and appropriate use.

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