Analgesic Encyclopedia Article

Analgesic by Confucius

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Analgesic

Analgesics are drugs used to control pain without producing anesthesia or loss of consciousness. Analgesics vary in terms of their class, chemical composition, and strength. Mild analgesics, such as aspirin (e.g., Bayer, Bufferin), acetominophen (e.g., Tylenol), and ibuprofen (e.g., Advil), work throughout the body. More potent agents, including the OPIATES codeine and morphine, work within the central nervous system (the brain and spinal cord). The availability of the more potent analgesics is more carefully regulated than that of aspirin and other similar analgesic/antiinflammatory agents that are sold in drugstores OVER-THE-COUNTER. The more potent opiate agents typically require prescriptions to be filled by pharmacists.

An important aspect of analgesics is that they work selectively on pain, but not on other types of sensation, such as touch. In this regard, they are easily distinguished from anesthetics which block all sensation. Local anesthetics, such as those used in dental work, make an area completely numb for several hours. General anesthetics typically are used to render patients unconscious for surgery.

See Also

Bibliography

HARDMAN, J. G., ET AL. EDS. (1996). *The Pharmacological Basis of Therapeutics*, 9th ed. New York: McGraw-Hill.