

Medicines for Children: information for parents and carers

Paracetamol for mild-to-moderate pain



This leaflet is about the use of paracetamol that has been prescribed for mild-to-moderate pain.

This leaflet has been written specifically for parents and carers about the use of this medicine in children. The information may differ from that provided by the manufacturer. Please read this leaflet carefully. Keep it somewhere safe so that you can read it again.

Wait at least 4 hours between doses of paracetamol. Do not give more than four doses in 24 hours.

Name of drug

Paracetamol

Common brands: Panadol®, Disprol®, Calpol®, Medinol®, Paldesic®, Alvedon®, Perfalgan®

Why is it important for my child to take this medicine?

Paracetamol will help your child to feel less pain.

What is paracetamol available as?

- Tablets (500 mg)
- Dispersible tablets (120 mg, 500 mg)
- Liquid medicine or syrup (120 mg or 250 mg in 5 mL) – sugar-free versions are available
- Suppositories (a range of strengths is available)

When should I give paracetamol?

- If your child needs help with pain day and night for several days, give a dose of paracetamol every 6 hours. This will help to manage the pain safely for a few days without the risk of giving too much paracetamol.
- If your child has pain that comes and goes, give a dose of paracetamol when they first complain of pain. **Wait at least 4 hours** before giving another dose.
- You must not give your child more than four doses of paracetamol in 24 hours, so you may have to wait up to 6 hours between doses.
- Write down the time that you give each dose, to help you remember.

How much should I give?

Your doctor will work out the amount of paracetamol (the dose) that is right for *your* child. The dose will be shown on the medicine label.

 **It is important that you follow your doctor's instructions.**

How should I give it?



Tablets should be swallowed with a glass of water, juice or similar. Your child should not chew the tablets.



Dispersible tablets: Dissolve the tablet in a glass of water or squash. Your child should drink it straight away. Make sure that they drink it all. You can give the mixture to your child using a spoon or oral syringe.



Liquid medicine or syrup: Measure out the right amount using a medicine spoon or oral syringe. You can get these from your pharmacist. Do not use a kitchen teaspoon as it will not give the right amount.



Suppositories

- Wash your hands with soap and hot water.
- Unwrap the suppository.
- Your child should be lying on his or her side or front.
- Hold one buttock gently to one side so that you can see the back passage.
- Hold the suppository with the rounded end close to the back passage.
- Use one finger to push the suppository gently into the back passage. It needs to go in by about 2 cm.
- Your child should stay lying down for about 15 minutes so that the suppository doesn't come out.
- Wash your hands again with soap and hot water.

If your child empties their bowels (does a poo) within 30 minutes of inserting a suppository, you will need to insert another one.

When will the medicine start working?

Your child should start to feel less pain about 30 minutes after taking paracetamol tablets or medicine. It may take up to an hour for a suppository to work properly.

What if my child is sick (vomits)?

Tablets or liquid medicine

- If your child is sick less than 30 minutes after having a dose of paracetamol, give them the same dose again.
- If your child is sick more than 30 minutes after taking a dose, you **do not** need to give them another dose. Wait until the next normal dose.

Suppository


- If your child is sick at any time, you do not need to give them another dose, as the suppository will still work.

What if I forget to give it?

- If your child is in pain, give the missed dose as soon as you remember.
- You must then **wait at least 4 hours** before giving the next dose.

 Never give a 'double' dose of paracetamol.

What if I give too much?

-  It can be dangerous to give your child too much paracetamol. The effects of an overdose may not be obvious, but they can be serious and need treatment.
- If you think you may have given an extra dose of paracetamol by mistake, **wait at least 8 hours** before giving any more.



If there is **any possibility** that your child may have had more than a double dose, or you are not sure, contact your doctor or NHS Direct (0845 4647) or take your child to hospital **straight away**.

- Take the medicine container or pack with you, even if it is empty. This will be useful to the doctor. Have the packet with you if you telephone for advice.

Are there any possible side-effects?

- Paracetamol rarely causes side-effects when given at the *correct* dosage.



Large amounts of paracetamol can cause permanent damage to the liver. It is therefore important that you follow the dosage instructions provided by your doctor.

Can other common medicines be given at the same time as paracetamol?



Many medicines that you can buy for colds or pain contain paracetamol (this information is given on the label). **Do not** give such medicines to your child if you have given them paracetamol, as you risk giving them too much.

- You can give your child medicines that contain ibuprofen, unless your doctor has told you not to.
- Check with your doctor or pharmacist **before** giving any other medicines to your child. This includes herbal or complementary medicines.

Is there anything else I need to know about this medicine?

- Paracetamol is an everyday drug, but it is potentially dangerous if too much is taken. Be careful to keep it out of the reach of children.

General advice

- If the paracetamol does not seem to be helping your child's pain, contact your doctor for advice. **Do not** give extra doses of paracetamol.
- Write down the times that you give paracetamol, to help you remember and to make sure that you do not give too much.
- Make sure that the medicines you have at home have not reached the 'best before' or 'use by' date on the packaging. Give old medicines to your pharmacist to dispose of.

Where I should keep this medicine?

- Keep the medicine in a cupboard, away from heat and direct sunlight. It does not need to be kept in the fridge.
- Make sure that children cannot see or reach the medicine.
- Keep the medicine in the container it came in.

Who to contact for more information

Your child's doctor or pharmacist will be able to give you more information about paracetamol and other medicines used to treat pain.

You can also get more information from NHS Direct (0845 4647, www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk).

www.medicinesforchildren.org.uk



Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health

WellChild 
the national charity for sick children

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We have written this leaflet to help you understand more about the medicine you are giving to your child. We take great care to make sure that the information is correct and up-to-date. However, medicines can be used in different ways for different patients. It is therefore important that you follow the advice of your doctor or pharmacist, as they understand your child's illness. If you are not sure about something, ask your doctor or pharmacist. Note that this leaflet applies to the use of medicines in the UK; it may not apply in other countries. The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH), The Neonatal and Paediatric Pharmacists Group (NPPG), WellChild and the contributors and editors cannot be held responsible for the accuracy of information, omissions of information, or any actions that may be taken as a consequence of reading the leaflet.