

## News Capsule – July 2009

### Tylenol - The Facts Behind the Scare

You've probably heard about safety concerns with Tylenol and acetaminophen.

#### Here are the facts:

- Tylenol is a medication commonly used for pain relief and lowering fevers in both adults and children.
- Tylenol is the brand name for acetaminophen or APAP. This medicine is in prescription and non-prescription medicines.
- Liver damage has occurred in people who take high doses of acetaminophen. Damage has occurred in some patients who have taken just 6grams per day for 2 days - that's twelve 500mg tablets per day.
- Most overdoses of acetaminophen are unintended and occur when people have taken multiple medications that contain acetaminophen. Besides being in many pain relievers, acetaminophen is also in some sleep aids and cough and cold products.
- People often delay seeking care since overdose symptoms are similar to flu symptoms.
- Taking recommended doses of Tylenol or acetaminophen is generally safe.

#### Risk factors for liver damage due to acetaminophen

- 3 or more alcoholic drinks per day
- Liver disease
- Malnutrition due to prolonged fasting
- Gastroenteritis
- HIV disease
- Use of medicines like: isoniazid, rifampin, phenytoin, phenobarbital, barbiturates and carbamazepine

If a suspected Tylenol or acetaminophen overdose occurs, call the Poison Prevention Center at 1-800-222-1222 or go to the emergency room.

#### To lower your risk of Tylenol/acetaminophen toxicity:

- Don't take more than one product that contains Tylenol, acetaminophen or APAP at a time without a doctor's supervision.
- Check the label on non-prescription products to see if acetaminophen is in it. Again, besides being in many pain relievers, it is also in some sleep aids and cough and cold products. It is in tablets, capsules and liquids.
- Ask your local pharmacist or click on Ask A Pharmacist at the [www.JustAskBlue.com](http://www.JustAskBlue.com) website to find out if acetaminophen is in your prescription medicines.
- Take only the recommended dose. Some doctors are now suggesting that the highest daily dose of acetaminophen should be 650mg five times a day. This is the same as taking two 325mg tablets five times a day.
- Lower doses are likely to be recommended for people who have three or more alcoholic drinks per day or have liver disease.
- Take tablets or capsules that contain 325mg of acetaminophen rather than 500mg or 625mg.
- Don't give acetaminophen to an infant or child without checking with your pharmacist or doctor about the correct dose. Use a dosing spoon to give liquid Tylenol or acetaminophen. Never use an eating or cooking spoon.
- Remember that Tylenol infant drops are a concentrated liquid and the dose for these concentrated infant drops are different than the dose of children's liquid Tylenol.

- If Tylenol or acetaminophen doesn't help your pain, do not increase the dose. Try another over-the-counter pain reliever or call your doctor instead.

Find a list of common medicines that contain acetaminophen at this site:

<http://tylenol.com/page.jhtml?id=tylenol/news/subpliver1.inc>

References: Food and Drug Administration 2009, the Pharmacist's Letter.

Questions about your medicines or health?

Click on <http://www.JustAskBlue.Com>. You ask, we answer!