



## What are the symptoms of paracetamol poisoning?

Paracetamol poisoning may start with loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, pallor and sweating followed by abdominal pain, liver enlargement and deterioration in liver functions. The liver damage may occur four to six days after the drug has been overdosed.

Paracetamol overdose (taken more than 150 miligram paracetamol per kilogram body weight) is an emergency requiring immediate hospital treatment. It can be life-threatening. Even if children do not have any symptoms initially, they must be taken to hospital urgently for assessment. Antidotal treatment is most effective if initiated within 8 hours of intoxication.

## Tips for the safe use of paracetamol

- Keep all medicines out of the reach of children. Do not stock unnecessary medicines at home.
- Follow the instructions when using paracetamol for your child. Pay attention to the drug label, in particular the ingredients, the recommended dose and the frequency of administration.
- The dose for a child depends on his age and weight. For young children under two, do not give paracetamol or other medications without the advice of a doctor.
- Follow the dose and frequency of the drugs recommended for the child. Consult a doctor or pharmacist if you are not sure or your child's illness persists.
- Be aware that many cold and cough medicines contain paracetamol. Avoid giving children more than one product containing paracetamol.
- Inform doctors and pharmacists that your child is taking paracetamol when getting a new prescription.
- Avoid using paracetamol for conditions other than fever or mild to moderate pain.
- Do not take paracetamol if your child is allergic to it.



## PREVENTION OF ACCIDENTAL PARACETAMOL POISONING IN CHILDREN



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## Is paracetamol safe?

Paracetamol is safe and effective, provided that a child takes the right dose at the right intervals. However, paracetamol overdose is particularly dangerous because of the risk of liver and other organ damage.



## What is paracetamol?

Paracetamol (also known as acetaminophen) is a commonly used analgesic (pain-killer) and antipyretic (to control fever).

Paracetamol is used to treat headache, aches and pains. It helps to reduce fever and improve the symptoms of cold and flu.

Paracetamol is available in the form of syrup, tablets, capsules, powder or as suppositories. It is also available in combination with other drugs in analgesics and over-the-counter cold medicines.

## Why does paracetamol poisoning occur in children?

With its popularity and easy availability, paracetamol is one of the most common drugs associated with accidental poisoning.

- Children are particularly vulnerable because of their natural curiosity and tendency to put things into their mouth. They can reach any drugs that are not properly stored.
- Parents may not read the drug labels carefully and follow the instruction. They may assume this commonly used drug is safe or they may find the instructions difficult to read or understand.
- They may give their children larger doses or at more frequent intervals, wrongly believing that it can reduce fever more quickly.
- They may give their children several drugs to relieve the cold symptoms without knowing that many drugs contain paracetamol.

All these can result in paracetamol overdose causing poisoning in children.

