Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

# Acetaminophen

This information from UpToDate® Lexidrug™ explains what you need to know about this medication, including what it's used for, how to take it, its side effects, and when to call your healthcare provider.

## Brand Names: US

8 Hour Pain Reliever [OTC]; 8 HR Arthritis Pain Relief [OTC]; Acetaminophen 8 Hour [OTC]; Aminofen [OTC]; Apra [OTC]; Arthritis Pain Relief [OTC] [DSC]; BetaTemp Childrens [OTC]; Childrens Acetaminophen [OTC] [DSC]; Childrens APAP [OTC]; Childrens Non-Aspirin [OTC]; Childrens Silapap [OTC] [DSC]; CuraNOL [OTC]; Ed-APAP [OTC]; ElixSure Fever/Pain [OTC] [DSC]; FeverAll Adults [OTC] [DSC]; FeverAll Childrens [OTC]; FeverAll Infants [OTC]; FeverAll Junior Strength [OTC]; FT 8 Hour Pain Relief [OTC]; FT Arthritis Pain Reliever [OTC] [DSC]; FT Children's Pain/Fever [OTC]; FT Pain & Fever Childrens [OTC]; FT Pain & Fever Infants [OTC]; FT Pain Relief Adult Extra St [OTC]; FT Pain Relief Extra Strength [OTC] [DSC]; FT Pain Relief [OTC]; FT Pain Reliever Adults [OTC]; FT Pain Reliever Children [OTC]; FT Pain Reliever Ex Str Adult [OTC]; FT Rapid Release Pain Relief [OTC]; GoodSense Pain & Fever Child [OTC]; GoodSense Pain & Fever Infants [OTC]; GoodSense Pain Relief Extra St [OTC]; Healthy Mama Shake That Ache [OTC]; Liquid Pain Relief [OTC]; M-PAP [OTC]; Mapap Acetaminophen Extra Str [OTC]; Mapap Arthritis Pain [OTC] [DSC]; Mapap Childrens [OTC]; Mapap [OTC]; Max Relief Jr Child Pain/Fever [OTC]; Max Relief Junior [OTC]; Non-Aspirin Extra Strength [OTC]; Non-Aspirin [OTC]; Pain & Fever Childrens [OTC]; Pain and Fever Relief Kids [OTC] [DSC]; Pain Relief Childrens [OTC]; Pain Relief Extra Strength [OTC]; Pain Relief Regular Strength [OTC]; Pain Relief [OTC]; Panadol Childrens [OTC]; Panadol Extra Strength [OTC]; Panadol Infants [OTC]; Pharbetol Extra Strength [OTC]; Pharbetol [OTC]; Triaminic Fever Reducer [OTC] [DSC]; Tylenol 8 Hour Arthritis Pain [OTC]; Tylenol 8 Hour [OTC]; Tylenol Childrens Chewables [OTC]; Tylenol

Childrens Pain + Fever [OTC]; Tylenol Childrens [OTC]; Tylenol Dissolve Packs [OTC]; Tylenol Extra Strength [OTC]; Tylenol for Children + Adults [OTC]; Tylenol Infants Pain+Fever [OTC]; Tylenol [OTC]

## Warning

- Liver problems have happened with the use of acetaminophen. Sometimes, this has led to a liver transplant or death. Most of the time, liver problems happened in people taking too much acetaminophen in a day. People were also often taking more than 1 drug that had acetaminophen in it. If you have questions, talk with your doctor.

## What is this drug used for?

- It is used to ease pain and fever.

## What do I need to tell my doctor BEFORE I take this drug?

- If you are allergic to this drug; any part of this drug; or any other drugs, foods, or substances. Tell your doctor about the allergy and what signs you had.
- If you have liver disease.

This is not a list of all drugs or health problems that interact with this drug.

Tell your doctor and pharmacist about all of your drugs (prescription or OTC, natural products, vitamins) and health problems. You must check to make sure that it is safe for you to take this drug with all of your drugs and health problems. Do not start, stop, or change the dose of any drug without checking with your doctor.

## What are some things I need to know or do while I take this drug?

- Tell all of your health care providers that you take this drug. This includes your doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and dentists.
- Avoid taking other products that have acetaminophen in them. Check labels closely. Too much acetaminophen may cause liver problems.
- Follow the directions exactly. Do not take more acetaminophen in a day than directed. If you do not know how much acetaminophen you can take in a day, ask your doctor or pharmacist. Call your doctor right away if you have taken too much acetaminophen in a day, even if you feel well.
- Talk with your doctor before you drink alcohol.
- This drug may affect certain lab tests. Tell all of your health care providers and lab workers that you take this drug.
- If you have phenylketonuria (PKU), talk with your doctor. Some products have phenylalanine.
- Different brands of this drug may have different doses for children. Talk with the doctor before giving this drug to a child.
- Tell your doctor if you are pregnant, plan on getting pregnant, or are breast-feeding. You will need to talk about the benefits and risks to you and the baby.

## What are some side effects that I need to call my doctor about right away?

**WARNING/CAUTION:** Even though it may be rare, some people may have very bad and sometimes deadly side effects when taking a drug. Tell your doctor or get medical help right away if you have any of the following signs or symptoms that may be related to a very bad side effect:

- Signs of an allergic reaction, like rash; hives; itching; red, swollen, blistered, or peeling skin with or without fever; wheezing; tightness in the chest or throat; trouble breathing, swallowing, or talking; unusual hoarseness; or swelling of the mouth, face, lips, tongue, or throat. Rarely, some allergic

reactions have been life-threatening.

- Signs of liver problems like dark urine, tiredness, decreased appetite, upset stomach or stomach pain, light-colored stools, throwing up, or yellow skin or eyes.
- Not able to pass urine or change in how much urine is passed.
- A severe skin reaction (Stevens-Johnson syndrome/toxic epidermal necrolysis) may happen. It can cause severe health problems that may not go away, and sometimes death. Get medical help right away if you have signs like red, swollen, blistered, or peeling skin (with or without fever); red or irritated eyes; or sores in your mouth, throat, nose, or eyes.

## What are some other side effects of this drug?

All drugs may cause side effects. However, many people have no side effects or only have minor side effects. Call your doctor or get medical help if any of these side effects or any other side effects bother you or do not go away:

- Upset stomach or throwing up.
- Trouble sleeping.
- Headache.
- Constipation.

These are not all of the side effects that may occur. If you have questions about side effects, call your doctor. Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects.

You may report side effects to your national health agency.

You may report side effects to the FDA at 1-800-332-1088. You may also report side effects at https://www.fda.gov/medwatch.

## How is this drug best taken?

Use this drug as ordered by your doctor. Read all information given to you. Follow all instructions closely.

### All oral products:

- Take with or without food.

### Chewable tablets:

- Chew well before swallowing.

### Oral-disintegrating tablet:

- Place on the tongue and let dissolve.

### Extended-release tablets:

- Swallow whole. Do not chew, break, or crush.
- Take with a full glass of water.

### All liquid products:

- Measure liquid doses carefully. Use the measuring device that comes with this drug. If there is none, ask the pharmacist for a device to measure this drug.

### Liquid (suspension):

- Shake well before use.

### Suppository:

- Use suppository rectally.
- Wash your hands before and after use.
- If suppository is soft, chill in a refrigerator or run cold water over it.
- To use suppository, take off foil wrapper.

- Wet suppository before putting in rectum.
- Put suppository into the rectum with gentle pressure, pointed end first. Do not handle too much.

### Injection:

- It is given into a vein for a period of time.

## What do I do if I miss a dose?

### Oral products and suppository:

- If you take this drug on a regular basis, take a missed dose as soon as you think about it.
- If it is close to the time for your next dose, skip the missed dose and go back to your normal time.
- Do not take 2 doses at the same time or extra doses.
- Many times this drug is taken on an as needed basis. Do not take more often than told by the doctor.

### Injection:

- Call your doctor to find out what to do.

## How do I store and/or throw out this drug?

### All oral products:

- Store at room temperature. Do not refrigerate or freeze.
- Store in the original container to protect from light.
- Keep lid tightly closed.
- Store in a dry place. Do not store in a bathroom.

### Suppository:

- Store at room temperature protected from light. Store in a dry place. Do not store in a bathroom.
- Do not freeze.
- Some brands may be stored in the refrigerator. Ask your pharmacist or check the package label.

### Injection:

- If you need to store this drug at home, talk with your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist about how to store it.

### All products:

- Keep all drugs in a safe place. Keep all drugs out of the reach of children and pets.
- Throw away unused or expired drugs. Do not flush down a toilet or pour down a drain unless you are told to do so. Check with your pharmacist if you have questions about the best way to throw out drugs. There may be drug take-back programs in your area.

## General drug facts

- If your symptoms or health problems do not get better or if they become worse, call your doctor.
- Do not share your drugs with others and do not take anyone else's drugs.
- Some drugs may have another patient information leaflet. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with your doctor, nurse, pharmacist, or other health care provider.
- Some drugs may have another patient information leaflet. Check with your pharmacist. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with your doctor, nurse, pharmacist, or other health care provider.
- If you think there has been an overdose, call your poison control center or

get medical care right away. Be ready to tell or show what was taken, how much, and when it happened.

## Consumer Information Use and Disclaimer

This generalized information is a limited summary of diagnosis, treatment, and/or medication information. It is not meant to be comprehensive and should be used as a tool to help the user understand and/or assess potential diagnostic and treatment options. It does NOT include all information about conditions, treatments, medications, side effects, or risks that may apply to a specific patient. It is not intended to be medical advice or a substitute for the medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment of a health care provider based on the health care provider's examination and assessment of a patient's specific and unique circumstances. Patients must speak with a health care provider for complete information about their health, medical questions, and treatment options, including any risks or benefits regarding use of medications. This information does not endorse any treatments or medications as safe, effective, or approved for treating a specific patient. UpToDate, Inc. and its affiliates disclaim any warranty or liability relating to this information or the use thereof. The use of this information is governed by the Terms of Use, available at https://www.wolterskluwer.com/en/know/clinical-effectiveness-terms.

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If you have questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

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