PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Acetaminophen and Caffeine

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

Excedrin Tension Headache [OTC]; Panadol Extra [OTC]

What is this drug used for?

- It is used to manage pain.

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.

This drug may interact with other drugs or health problems.

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.
- Do not take more than what your doctor told you to take. Taking more than you are told may raise your chance of severe side effects.
- Do not take this drug for longer than you were told by your doctor.
- Avoid taking other products that have acetaminophen in them. Check labels closely. Too much acetaminophen may cause liver problems.
- 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.
- 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.
- Limit your use of caffeine (for example, tea, coffee, cola) and chocolate. Use with this drug may cause nervousness, shakiness, and a fast heartbeat.
- Talk with your doctor before you drink alcohol.
- This drug may affect certain lab tests. Be sure your doctor and lab workers know you use this drug.
- Do not give this drug to a child younger than 12 years old without first checking with the doctor.
- 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.
- 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.
- A fast heartbeat.
- 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:

- Feeling nervous and excitable.
- Trouble sleeping.

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.

- Take with or without food. Take with food if it causes an upset stomach.

What do I do if I miss a dose?

- 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.

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

- Store at room temperature in a dry place. Do not store in a bathroom.
- Keep lid tightly closed.
- 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. 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.

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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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