

Acetaminophen (Tylenol®) and the Risk of Liver Damage

Acetaminophen

Acetaminophen (Tylenol®) is found in many over-the-counter and prescription medicines. It works to control pain and reduce fever.

Although acetaminophen is helpful, taking too much can cause liver damage. When taken correctly, acetaminophen is generally safe and effective.

Medicines that Contain Acetaminophen

In general, medicines that contain acetaminophen include:

- over-the-counter: medicines for cold, flu, allergies and pain
- prescription: pain relievers.

The following are common medicines that contain acetaminophen. **Please note: This is not a complete list.** If you have questions about medicines that contain acetaminophen, talk with your health care provider or pharmacist.

Prescription medicines

- Darvocet®
- Percocet®
- Tylenol 3®
- Vicodin®.

Over-the-counter medicines

- Alka-Seltzer Plus®
- Benadryl®: Allergy Plus Sinus Headache
- Coricidin®: HBP Maximum Strength Flu tablets, HBP Nighttime Multi-Symptom Cold liquid, HBP Cold & Flu Tablets
- Excedrin®: all products
- Pamprin®
- Robitussin®: Cough, Multisymptom Cough & Cold
- Sudafed PE™: Cold & Cough, Multi-Symptom Severe Cold, Sinus & Allergy
- Theraflu®: all regular and severe strength caplets and hot liquids
- Triaminic®: Cold & Cough Liquid, Multi-Symptom Fever Liquid, Cough & Sore Throat Liquid, Cough & Sore Throat Soft Chews
- Tylenol®: Regular Strength pain reliever, Extra Strength pain reliever, PM pain reliever/sleep aid, allergy and sinus formulas, Severe Allergy, Arthritis Pain, cold multi-symptom formulas, Sore Throat adult liquids
- Vicks®: Formula 44® Cough & Cold, DayQuil® or NyQuil® Cold & Flu Liquid and LiquiCaps

(over)

How to Safely Take Acetaminophen

- Follow all medicine directions.
- Do not take more medicine than directed.
- Keep track of how much acetaminophen you take each day.
- Read the “Drug Facts” on the medicine package labels to see if it contains acetaminophen. It may be listed as “APAP.”
- Ask your pharmacist if you are not sure if the medicine you are taking contains acetaminophen.

Who is at Risk for Liver Damage

You are at risk for liver damage if you:

- take more medicine than directed or for longer than needed
- take more than one medicine at the same time that contains acetaminophen
- have a history of liver disease
- drink 3 or more alcoholic beverages each day.

Talk with your doctor about taking lower doses of acetaminophen each day. You may be able to take other medicines in place of acetaminophen.

Signs of Liver Damage

Signs of liver damage usually do not appear right away. Call your doctor if you have any of these signs:

- stomach pain
- loss of appetite
- nausea
- vomiting.

Liver damage can cause liver failure and death without treatment.

Source: Federal Drug Administration