

Acetaminophen Encyclopedia Article

Acetaminophen

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Acetaminophen

One of several medications used to reduce fever and other general symptoms of illness, such as body aches and headache.

Acetaminophen, sold without a prescription from a physician, is one of several medications used to treat fever and to relieve pain and general illness symptoms. (Other medications of this type, known as antipyretic, or fever-reducing, agents are aspirin and ibuprofen. Aspirin may cause stomach upset, and is associated with Reye syndrome, and is therefore not recommended for children in most situations.) Acetaminophen may be purchased in generic form, and under several trade names, such as Panadol®, Tempra®, and Tylenol®. Dosage of all medications—including acetaminophen—should be determined by a child's weight, not his or her age. However, unless a child is exceptionally under- or overweight for his or her age, it is generally safe to follow the age/weight/dosage charts provided on the acetaminophen product label. In general, babies under the age of three months should not be given acetaminophen—or any other medication—without consulting a physician first. For children, acetaminophen comes in liquid form, in elixir (syrup) form for the toddler, in chewable tablets for the preschool child, and in tablets or capsules to be swallowed for older children and adults.

In the accompanying table, dosages are given in milliliters (ml); 5 ml equals 1 teaspoon (tsp.). Dosage may be repeated every four hours, but should not be given more than five times per 24-hour period.