



Acetaminophen

Generic Name: acetaminophen (oral) (a SEET a MIN oh fen)

Brand Names: *Actamin, Anacin AF, Apra, Bromo Seltzer, Children's Tylenol, Elixsure Fever/Pain, Mapap, Medi-Tabs, Q-Pap, Silapap Childrens, Tactinal, Tempra Quicklets, Tycolene, **Tylenol**, Vitapap*

Acetaminophen is also available in many over-the-counter combination medications with other drugs, including Actifed, Alka-Seltzer Plus Liquid Gels, Cepacol, Contac, Coridicin, Dayquil, Dimetapp, Dristan, Excedrin, Feverall, Liquiprin, Midol, Nyquil, Panadol, Robitussin Singlet, Sinutab, Sudafed, Theraflu, Triaminic, Vanquish, Vicks, and Zicam.

Acetaminophen is also found in many prescription combination drugs, including Butalbital, Endocet, Fioricet, Hycotab, Hydrocet, Hydrocodone bitartrate, Lortab, Percocet, Phenaphen, Sedapap, Tapanol, Tylenol with codeine, Tylox, Ultracet, Vicodin, and Zydone.

Medically reviewed by **Kaci Durbin, MD**. Last updated on Sep 1, 2020.

What is acetaminophen?

Acetaminophen is a **pain reliever** and a fever reducer.

Acetaminophen is used to treat mild to moderate pain, to treat moderate to severe pain in conjunction with opiates, or to reduce fever. Common conditions that acetaminophen treats include headache, muscle aches, **arthritis**, backache, toothaches, sore throat, colds, flu, and **fevers**.

Acetaminophen may also be used for purposes not listed in this medication guide. It is typically used orally, but can be given intravenously.

Important information

You should not use this medication if you have severe liver disease.

An overdose of acetaminophen can damage your liver or cause death.

- **Adults and teenagers who weigh at least 110 pounds** should not take more than 1000 milligrams (mg) at one time, or more than 4000 mg in 24 hours.
- **Children younger than 12 years old** should not take more than 5 doses in 24 hours, using only the number of milligrams per dose that is recommended for the child's weight and age.
Use exactly as directed on the label.

Avoid also using other medicines that contain acetaminophen (sometimes abbreviated as APAP), or **you could have a fatal overdose.**

Call your doctor at once if you have nausea, pain in your upper stomach, itching, loss of appetite, dark urine, clay-colored stools, or jaundice (yellowing of your skin or eyes).

Stop taking this medicine and call your doctor right away if you have skin redness or a rash that spreads and causes blistering and peeling.

Before taking this medicine

You should not take acetaminophen if you are allergic to it, or if you have severe liver disease.

Do not take this medicine without a doctor's advice if you have ever had alcoholic liver disease (cirrhosis) or if you drink more than 3 alcoholic beverages per day. You may not be able to take acetaminophen.

Your doctor will determine whether acetaminophen is safe for you to use during pregnancy. **Do not use this medicine without the advice of your doctor if you are pregnant.**

Acetaminophen can pass into breast milk. Ask a doctor before using this medicine if you are breastfeeding.

Do not give this medicine to a child younger than 2 years old without the advice of a doctor.

How should I take acetaminophen?

Use acetaminophen exactly as directed on the label, or as prescribed by your doctor. Do not use in larger or smaller amounts or for longer than recommended.

Do not take more of this medication than is recommended. **An overdose of acetaminophen can damage your liver or cause death.**

- **Adults and teenagers who weigh at least 110 pounds (50 kilograms):** Do not take more than 1000 milligrams (mg) at one time. Do not take more than 4000 mg in 24 hours.
- **Children younger than 12 years old:** Do not take more than 5 doses of acetaminophen in 24 hours. Use only the number of milligrams per dose that is recommended for the child's weight and age. **Use exactly as directed on the label.**
- Avoid also using other medicines that contain acetaminophen, or **you could have a fatal overdose.**

If you are treating a child, use a pediatric form of acetaminophen. Use only the special dose-

measuring dropper or oral syringe that comes with the specific pediatric form you are using. Carefully follow the dosing directions on the medicine label.

Measure **liquid medicine** with the dosing syringe provided, or with a special dose-measuring spoon or medicine cup. If you do not have a dose-measuring device, ask your pharmacist for one.

Acetaminophen made for infants is available in two different dose concentrations, and each concentration comes with its own medicine dropper or oral syringe. These dosing devices are not equal between the different concentrations. Using the wrong device may cause you to give your child an overdose of acetaminophen. **Never mix and match dosing devices between infant formulations of acetaminophen.**

You may need to shake the liquid before each use. Follow the directions on the medicine label.

The chewable tablet must be chewed thoroughly before you swallow it.

Make sure your hands are dry when handling the acetaminophen disintegrating tablet. Place the tablet on your tongue. It will begin to dissolve right away. Do not swallow the tablet whole. Allow it to dissolve in your mouth without chewing.

To use the acetaminophen effervescent granules, dissolve one packet of the granules in at least 4 ounces of water. Stir this mixture and drink all of it right away. To make sure you get the entire dose, add a little more water to the same glass, swirl gently and drink right away.

The **oral powder** should be placed directly on the tongue and swallowed.

Stop taking acetaminophen and call your doctor if:

- you still have a sore throat after 2 days of use;
- you still have a fever after 3 days of use;
- you still have pain after 7 days of use (or 5 days if treating a child);
- you have a skin rash, ongoing headache, nausea, vomiting, or any redness or swelling; or
- if your symptoms get worse, or if you have any new symptoms.

This medication can cause unusual results with certain lab tests for glucose (sugar) in the urine. Tell any doctor who treats you that you are using acetaminophen.

Store at room temperature away from heat and moisture.

See also:

Acetaminophen dosage information (in more detail)

What happens if I miss a dose?

Since acetaminophen is taken as needed, you may not be on a dosing schedule. If you are taking the medication regularly, take the missed dose as soon as you remember. Skip the missed dose if it is almost time for your next scheduled dose. Do not take extra medicine to make up the missed dose.

What happens if I overdose?

Seek emergency medical attention or call the Poison Help line at 1-800-222-1222. **An overdose of acetaminophen can be fatal.**

The first signs of an acetaminophen overdose include loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, stomach pain, sweating, and confusion or weakness. Later symptoms may include pain in your upper stomach, dark urine, and yellowing of your skin or the whites of your eyes.

What should I avoid while taking acetaminophen?

Ask a doctor or pharmacist before using any other cold, allergy, pain, or sleep medication. Acetaminophen (sometimes abbreviated as APAP) is contained in many combination medicines. **Taking certain products together can cause you to get too much acetaminophen which can lead to a fatal overdose.** Check the label to see if a medicine contains acetaminophen or APAP.

Avoid drinking alcohol. It may increase your risk of liver damage while taking acetaminophen.

Acetaminophen side effects

Get emergency medical help if you have **signs of an allergic reaction to acetaminophen:** hives; difficulty breathing; swelling of your face, lips, tongue, or throat.

In rare cases, acetaminophen may cause a severe skin reaction that can be fatal. This could occur even if you have taken this medicine in the past and had no reaction. **Stop taking this medicine and call your doctor right away if you have skin redness or a rash that spreads and causes blistering and peeling.** If you have this type of reaction, you should never again take any medicine that contains acetaminophen.

Stop taking acetaminophen and call your doctor at once if you have:

- nausea, upper stomach pain, itching, loss of appetite;

- excessive sweating and severe tiredness;
- dark urine, clay-colored stools; or
- jaundice (yellowing of the skin or eyes).

The most common side effects of acetaminophen include:

- nausea and vomiting;
- headache; or
- insomnia

This is not a complete list of side effects and others may occur. Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects. You may report side effects to FDA at 1-800-FDA-1088.

See also:

Acetaminophen side effects (in more detail)

What other drugs will affect acetaminophen?

Other drugs may interact with acetaminophen, including prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal products. Tell each of your health care providers about all medicines you use now and any medicine you start or stop using.

See also:

Acetaminophen drug interactions (in more detail)

Further information

Remember, keep this and all other medicines out of the reach of children, never share your medicines with others, and use acetaminophen only for the indication prescribed.

Always consult your healthcare provider to ensure the information displayed on this page applies to your personal circumstances.

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Popular FAQ

Is it safe to take Ibuprofen (Advil) with acetaminophen (Tylenol)?



More FAQ

- **What's the best sore throat medicine to use?**
- **Acetaminophen vs ibuprofen: What is the difference?**
- **Is acetaminophen the same as Tylenol?**
- **COVID-19, Flu, Cold or Hay Fever - Which one do I have?**
- **Is acetaminophen a blood thinner?**
- **Is acetaminophen (Tylenol) an NSAID Drug?**
- **Is Tylenol (acetaminophen) an anti-inflammatory drug?**
- **Can I give my dog or cat Tylenol (acetaminophen)?**
- **Can I take Tylenol while pregnant?**
- **Can you take paracetamol (acetaminophen) with antibiotics?**
- **What antibiotics are used to treat bronchitis?**
- **Can I use Tylenol for dengue fever?**