

Pain and Fever Relief

Brown Health Services Patient Education Series

Acetaminophen/APAP/Paracetamol (Tylenol)

What is it?

Medication that is both a fever reducer and pain reliever but not an anti-inflammatory.

How do you take it?

Regular strength (325 mg each tablet): 2 tabs every 4-6 hours as needed with no more than 10 tablets per day (3250 mg).

Extra strength (500 mg each tablet): 2 tabs every 6 hours as needed with no more than 6 tablets per day (3000 mg).

- Does not need to be taken with food
- Easy on the stomach, so it is helpful when there are symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain
- No effect on platelet function (blood clotting) so it is less likely to cause bleeding when used for pain after surgery, for example.
- **It is very important not to exceed the recommended dosage of Tylenol (acetaminophen), as it can be toxic to the liver.**
- If you are taking other OTC combination products which contain acetaminophen (for example, Dayquil or Nyquil) be sure to read the labels to avoid excessive dosing.
- Prescription pain relievers may also contain Tylenol (acetaminophen), such as Percocet, Vicodin, Tylenol with codeine.

It is best to take only 1 medicine containing acetaminophen at a time to avoid overdosing.

Ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil, Nuprin)

What is it?

Medication that is fever reducer, pain reliever and anti-inflammatory.

How do you take it?

Over the counter strength Ibuprofen (200 mg each tablet): 2 tabs every 4-6 hours as needed with food or 3 tabs every 6 hours, with food, no more than 2400 mg per day.

Prescription strength Ibuprofen: one 600 mg tablet three times daily with food OR one 800 mg tablet three times daily with food.

- Take with food as it may be irritating to the stomach, and discontinue if stomach pain develops.
- Can sometimes affect platelet function (blood clotting).
- Do not exceed the maximum daily dosing per day.
- It may be more effective than Tylenol for muscle aches and orthopedic injuries.
- In order to reduce inflammation it may be necessary to use it consistently for several days.
- It should be avoided in individuals with kidney problems.
- Many over-the-counter combination products also contain ibuprofen (for example, Advil Cold and Sinus, or Motrin PM), so be sure you read labels to avoid an overdose.

Alternating Tylenol and Ibuprofen

For intense pain and high fever, both Tylenol and Ibuprofen can be taken. They have a different chemical composition and may give more relief together than can be provided using either alone.

How to alternate Ibuprofen and Tylenol:

- With food, take two ibuprofen 200 mg tablets and then 2-3 hours later, if fever and pain is not relieved, take two regular strength Tylenol 325 mg tablets.
- Two-three hours later, if fever and/or pain persist, take two more ibuprofen tablets (200 mg each).
- You can continue to alternate Ibuprofen and Tylenol, up to the maximum doses of each medicine, but do not exceed the maximum dose of each.
- Be sure to maintain proper dosing intervals between successive doses of the same medication (at least 4 hours).

If you have not eaten or have an upset stomach, start with tylenol then add ibuprofen once you can eat according to the description above.

Fahrenheit/Celsius

Conversion Scale

98.6 F = 37.0 C

100 F = 37.7 C

101 F = 38.2 C

102 F = 38.9 C

103 F = 39.4 C

104 F = 39.9 C

105 F = 40.5 C