



Wyvern College



St Edmund's Girls' School

Safe Use of Painkillers

We would like to remind parents and carers about the correct use of painkillers such as paracetamol and ibuprofen. Because these medications are so readily available, there are concerns about their use (including their chronic/ongoing use), particularly in children and young people.

Paracetamol

Paracetamol, like many drugs, may be harmful if incorrectly used. Paracetamol poisoning, also known as acetaminophen poisoning, is caused by excessive use of [paracetamol](#) (acetaminophen).

The NHS website has useful information:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/paracetamol/>



Some facts:

- In both the United States and the United Kingdom, paracetamol is the most common cause of acute liver failure; the action of paracetamol on the liver may be due to either acute ingestion (in large doses) or chronic ingestion.
- Ingestion of large doses of paracetamol can lead to complications such as kidney failure, pancreatitis, low blood sugar, and lactic acidosis; death may also potentially result from an overdose of paracetamol;
- The toxic dose of paracetamol is highly variable. In general the recommended maximum daily dose for healthy adults is 4 grams; higher doses lead to increasing risk of toxicity.

Importantly, *chronic larger-than-normal doses are the major cause of paracetamol toxicity in children.* Parents are reminded that painkillers such as paracetamol should only be taken where absolutely necessary and strictly according to directions. Always discuss long-term use of such medications with your GP or physician.

Be aware that some medicines may already contain paracetamol (e.g. cold and flu remedies; combination painkillers); this fact must be considered when assessing paracetamol use. We don't wish to be too alarmist, but government statistics in 2016 stated that *"There were 219 deaths involving paracetamol and its compounds in 2016... of these deaths, 72% involved paracetamol not from a compound and the remaining involved a paracetamol compound..."*

- (<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/bulletins/deathsrelatedtodrugpoisoninginenglandandwales/2016registrations>)



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Paracetamol (continued)

The MHRA (Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency) has issued statutory warnings regarding the labelling of all medicines which contain paracetamol and consequently advise the following: *“Talk to a doctor at once if your child takes too much of this medicine [paracetamol], even if they seem well. This is because too much paracetamol can cause delayed, serious liver damage”.*

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/328330/Statutory_warnings_for_all_medicines_containing_paracetamol.pdf]

Note also the NHS advice re taking paracetamol and ibuprofen together in children under 16 years of age: <https://www.nhs.uk/chq/Pages/2569.aspx?CategoryID=73&SubCategoryID=103>

Ibuprofen



Ibuprofen is a medication in the nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) class. It is mainly used for treating pain, fever, and inflammation.

The NHS website has useful information:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/ibuprofen/>

Adverse effects of ibuprofen include nausea, heartburn, diarrhoea, constipation, gastrointestinal ulceration/bleeding, headache, dizziness, salt and fluid retention, and hypertension. Ibuprofen may cause vomiting if taken on an empty stomach; it has also been associated with the risk of heart failure, kidney failure, and liver failure. At low doses, it does not appear to increase the risk of heart attack; however, at higher doses it may do so. *Ibuprofen can also result in significantly worsened asthma.*

Again, if you are giving your child ibuprofen, please be aware of instructions regarding the correct dosage. If seeking to give ibuprofen on a long-term basis, see your GP first.

Administration of Medicines in School

If you would like school to administer medication for your daughter/son, it is essential that you complete a ‘Consent to Administer Medication’ form (available on the school website, or from Reception). Medication (in-date, clearly labelled and with the child’s name on it) should be taken to the Main Admin Office, where it will be appropriately stored and dispensed to your child when required.

Medication must not be left in students’ bags at school. If medication is not handed in to the Main Admin Office, we are unable to sufficiently monitor its correct use.

Thank you for your assistance in keeping our school healthy and safe.