

Pain relief medicine in children

Patient information

The most common pain medicines given to children at home are called paracetamol and ibuprofen. They can help to relieve discomfort in your child - for example from a tummy ache, bruised leg, or teething.

There are different brand names for these medicines such as 'Calpol' and 'Nurofen'. From these names it can be difficult to know which medicine you are buying. Don't worry, it will tell you on the packet whether there is paracetamol or ibuprofen in the medicine. Ask your pharmacist, doctor, or nurse if you are not sure.

The medicines can work well together, so it is possible to give both paracetamol and ibuprofen at the same time if the pain is bad. It is very important to make sure that you do not give different brands which contain the same medicine at the same time - remember to check the packets.

Do not give medicine containing aspirin to children.

Doses of pain relief medicine

The amount (or dose) of medicine that you can give to your child depends on their age, it will tell you on the packet how much you can give them. If you are not sure, it is better to ask your pharmacist, nurse, or doctor. If your child has an illness which makes them very underweight for their age, talk to your doctor about the best doses for your child.

Paracetamol can be given every 4 to 6 hours (maximum of four doses in 24 hours).

Ibuprofen can be given every 8 hours (maximum three doses in 24 hours).

You can give paracetamol and ibuprofen at the same time. Or you can give them at different times, for example paracetamol, then ibuprofen, then paracetamol and so on. It does not matter if they are given together or apart as long as you do not go over the maximum dose of each medicine in 24 hours.

If the pain is bad, give pain relief regularly as this will help keep your child as comfortable as possible.

How can I tell if my child is in pain?

The faces pain scale can be used for children aged four years or older to talk about pain. It works by your child picking a face that best describes their pain. Older children may prefer to pick a number on the scale.



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