



(Link: www.nhs.uk/)

Paracetamol for adults

Common brands: Panadol

Paracetamol is a painkiller that helps with pain and high temperature. You can buy most types from shops and pharmacies, but some types are only available with a prescription.

This information is for adults aged 18 or over. There's separate information about paracetamol for children (Calpol) (Link: www.nhs.uk/medicines/paracetamol-for-children/).

What paracetamol is for

Paracetamol is a painkiller that can be used to treat:

- headaches
- joint swelling and stiffness
- symptoms of a cold or flu, such as a high temperature (fever)
- toothache
- sore throat

How to take paracetamol and how much to take (dose)

There are different types of paracetamol, including:

- tablets and capsules
- liquid (oral suspension)
- suppositories (medicine you gently push into your bottom)

How you take or use paracetamol depends on the type you're taking and other factors. For example, if you weigh less than 50kg, you may need to take a lower dose.

Always check the packet or leaflet that comes with your medicine.

If you're not sure how to take it, or have any problems, speak to a pharmacist or doctor.

How to take and use common types of paracetamol

[500mg or 1g tablets and capsules](#)

Paracetamol tablets and capsules for adults usually contain 500mg of paracetamol.

You can get tablets that you swallow whole with water and tablets that dissolve in water, sometimes called dissolvable, effervescent or soluble.

You can take tablets or capsules with or without food.

For 500mg tablets and capsules:

- one dose is 1 or 2 tablets or capsules
- leave at least 4 hours between each dose
- do not take more than 8 tablets or capsules in 24 hours

1g tablets

You can sometimes get 1g (1000mg) tablets either on prescription or from a pharmacy.

If you're taking these, you should only take one at a time and do not take more than 4 tablets in 24 hours.

[250mg/5ml or 500mg/5ml liquid \(oral suspension\)](#)

Paracetamol liquid (oral suspension) for adults usually contains either 250mg of paracetamol in 5ml of medicine (250mg/5ml) or 500mg of paracetamol in 5ml of medicine (500mg/5ml).

Both types come with either a spoon or syringe to make sure you measure the correct amount.

For 250mg/5ml oral suspension:

- one dose is 10ml to 20ml
- leave at least 4 hours between doses
- do not take it more than 4 doses in 24 hours

For 500mg/5ml oral suspension:

- one dose is 5ml to 10ml
- leave at least 4 hours between doses
- do not take it more than 4 times in 24 hours

[500mg suppositories](#)

Paracetamol suppositories for adults usually contain either 500mg or 1000mg (1g) of paracetamol.

If you're using a 500mg paracetamol suppository:

- one dose is 1 or 2 suppositories
- take the wrapping off and push the suppository gently into your bottom (anus)
- leave at least 4 hours between doses
- do not use more than 8 suppositories in 24 hours

[1g suppositories](#)

If you're using 1000mg (1g) suppositories, you should only use one at a time and do not use more than 4 suppositories in 24 hours.

Leave at least 4 hours between doses.

Important

Do not take or use paracetamol for more than 3 days unless a doctor tells you to.

You should also avoid taking paracetamol at the same time as other medicines containing paracetamol, for example, cold and flu remedies. This is because you may take too much, which can be dangerous.

If you take too much paracetamol

Taking an extra dose of paracetamol is unlikely to cause problems, but it's important to get medical advice if you take too much as it can sometimes damage your liver.

Get help from NHS 111 if:

- you've taken more paracetamol than it says on the packet or leaflet

You can call 111 or get help from 111 online (Link: <https://111.nhs.uk/triage/check-your-symptoms>).

If you're told to go to A&E, do not drive. Ask someone to drive you or call 999 and ask for an ambulance.

Bring the paracetamol packet or leaflet inside it, any remaining medicine, and any other medicines you take.

Side effects of paracetamol

Paracetamol very rarely causes side effects if you take it correctly.

Serious side effects

Serious side effects are rare but can include:

- an allergic reaction (anaphylaxis (Link: www.nhs.uk/conditions/anaphylaxis/)) – causing symptoms such as a swollen throat or tongue, a raised and itchy rash, and difficulty breathing
- liver problems – causing symptoms such as feeling sick (nausea), or your skin – or the white part of your eyes – turning yellow (jaundice (Link: www.nhs.uk/conditions/jaundice/)), although this may be harder to notice on black or brown skin
- a problem with your blood cells, causing symptoms such as bruising easily and nosebleeds

Call NHS 111 if:

- you're taking paracetamol and think you might be having serious side effects

More about side effects

These are not all the side effects of paracetamol.

For a full list, see the leaflet that comes with your medicine or search for your medicine leaflet on the electronic medicines compendium website (Link: <https://www.medicines.org.uk/emc/browse-medicines>).

You can report any side effects you get on the Yellow Card website (Link: <https://yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk/>)

Who can and cannot take paracetamol

Most adults can take paracetamol.

But it's not suitable for everyone. For example, it may not be suitable if:

- you've had an allergic reaction to paracetamol before
- you have a kidney or liver condition
- you're dependent on alcohol or binge drink (drink heavily over a short period of time)

Check the packet or leaflet that comes with your medicine to see if it's suitable for you. Speak to a pharmacist or doctor if you're not sure if you can take or use it.

Breastfeeding and paracetamol

Paracetamol is usually the best painkiller to take if you're breastfeeding.

It's rare for breastfed babies to get any side effects from medicine you're taking, but speak to a healthcare professional if you have any concerns about your baby.

Pregnancy and paracetamol

If you're pregnant, paracetamol is usually the best painkiller to use. It's commonly taken during pregnancy and does not harm your baby.

Find out more about taking paracetamol during pregnancy on the Bumps (Best Use of Medicines in Pregnancy) website (Link: <https://www.medicinesinpregnancy.org/leaflets-a-z/paracetamol/>)

Taking paracetamol with other medicines, food and drink

There are some medicines, remedies and supplements that may not mix well with paracetamol.

This includes:

- other medicine containing paracetamol, such as cold and flu medicine
- medicines that stop you being sick, including metoclopramide (Link: www.nhs.uk/medicines/metoclopramide/) and domperidone (Link: www.nhs.uk/medicines/domperidone/)
- medicines to help prevent blood clots, such as warfarin (Link: www.nhs.uk/medicines/warfarin/)
- an antibiotic called flucloxacillin (Link: www.nhs.uk/medicines/flucloxacillin/)

Check the packet or leaflet that comes with your medicine to see if it's suitable for you. Speak to a pharmacist or doctor if you're not sure you can take it.

Taking paracetamol with ibuprofen

Adults can take paracetamol at the same time as ibuprofen if needed. But it's a good idea to try them on their own first to see if they help your pain.

Use the lowest dose that works for you and stop taking them when the pain has gone.

Food, drink and alcohol with paracetamol

You can eat and drink normally (including alcohol), when taking paracetamol.

Find out more about your medicine

To find out more about your medicine, you can:

- check the leaflet that comes with it
- search for the medicine leaflet on the electronic medicines compendium (EMC) website (Link: <https://www.medicines.org.uk/emc/browse-medicines>)
- speak to a pharmacist for advice

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