

Mild pain: Should my child take pain relief medication?

DECISION AID for families



What is this decision aid for?

- This decision aid can help you decide whether to use pain relief medication when **your child** has **mild pain**.
- It is designed to be used with your health care provider to help your family make a **shared decision** about what is best for your child.

What causes mild pain?

- Children can experience mild pain after an injury, during an illness, or after some operations.

What pain relief options are there?

- Pain relief medication can be used for your child to reduce the pain. Some of the common pain reliever medications are **Ibuprofen** and **Paracetamol**.

Signs that your child is in pain ⁽¹⁾

- Some children will be able to **tell** you that they are in pain and where the pain is in their body.
- If your child cannot tell you that they are in pain, they may **show** that they are in pain by:
 - Face:** a frown, wince or grimace
 - Legs:** restless legs, looking tense or uneasy
 - Activity:** shifting around more, or holding still
 - Cry:** a moan, whimper, or verbal complaint
 - Comforting:** unable to be comforted by you

What are the treatment options?

Not taking pain-relief medication

Some non-medication options include comforting your child, helping them to relax, distracting them, or providing a cool compress.

Taking pain-relief medication

There are two (2) common treatment options in Australia:
please note: Some children with health conditions should not take these medicines – if you are unsure, please check with your health care provider.

Ibuprofen (brand names include **Nurofen®** and **Advil®**)

Most children over three (3) months of age can have ibuprofen at a dose according to their age and weight.

Ibuprofen should not be used in children under three (3) months of age.

There are different ways to give ibuprofen to your child (such as tablet, capsule, liquid, dissolvable tablet).

Liquid form is only available in pharmacy

Paracetamol (brand names include **Panado®** and **Dymadon®**)

Most children over one (1) month of age can have paracetamol at a dose according to their age and weight.

Babies under one (1) month should only have paracetamol if prescribed by a health care provider.

There are different ways to give paracetamol to your child (such as tablet, capsule, liquid, suppository).

Liquid form is only available in pharmacy



Discuss with a health care provider if your child needs to take both ibuprofen and paracetamol

When might ibuprofen or paracetamol be used?

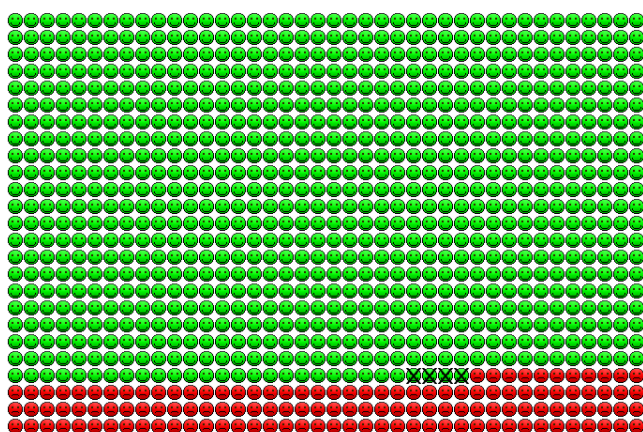
- Your health care provider may suggest pain relief medication if your child is experiencing mild pain from injury, illness or after some surgeries.

What are the likely benefits?

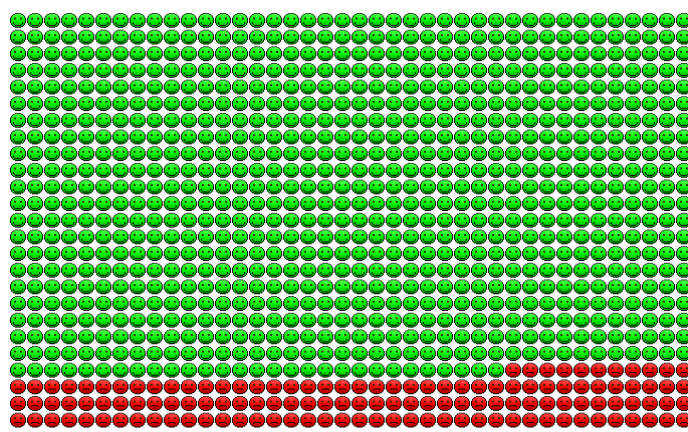
- Ibuprofen and paracetamol both work well for pain relief in children**, where ibuprofen may be more effective. ⁽²⁾
- Ibuprofen and paracetamol have a similar tolerability and safety profile** when compared with each other and with a placebo (a dummy medication with no active ingredient). ⁽²⁻⁴⁾
- Ibuprofen or paracetamol may be more effective** in relieving short term ear pain than placebo in children with acute otitis media (middle ear infection). ⁽⁵⁾
- Ibuprofen may reduce pain intensity more effectively when taking immediately after an operation** (for up to two hours) compared to a placebo or paracetamol. ⁽⁶⁾
- Ibuprofen is most effective for treatment of inflammatory pain (e.g. toothache and sprained ankle)**. ⁽⁷⁾

What are the possible harms?

- The more commonly reported side effects, all with low occurrence, involve the gastrointestinal (stomach), renal (kidney) or respiratory (airway and lungs) systems. ⁽⁷⁾
- In a study summarising results of 18 studies comparing ibuprofen and paracetamol for children, results showed that:
 - For every 1000 children who took ibuprofen, 135 experienced mild side effects** related to their stomach, kidneys or breathing (asthma). **865** had no problems.
 - For every 1000 children who took Paracetamol, 131 experienced mild side effects** related to their stomach, kidneys or breathing (asthma). **869** had no problems



KEY
 ● Good outcome
 ● Bad outcome
 ✕ Better with Paracetamol



KEY
 ● Good outcome
 ● Bad outcome

- Overall, side effects are similar, but **four (4) more per 1000 children** that take ibuprofen experienced **mild** side effects compared to paracetamol. ⁽³⁾



Important information

- **Always follow the dosing instructions on the package as children's ibuprofen and paracetamol (usually as a liquid) are provided in different strengths to the adult versions of the medications.**
- **Always discuss and follow the dosing instructions from health care providers after surgery or other medical treatment.**

Overdoses of pain-relieving medicine

- **Too much ibuprofen** may result in a stomach upset, or can affect breathing, or can cause drowsiness (in severe cases).
- **Too much paracetamol** could harm your child's liver. Paracetamol is one of the most common medicines taken by children in an accidental overdose.

If you are worried that your child might have had too much ibuprofen or paracetamol,

- Contact the **Poisons Information Centre** to talk to a pharmacist (**13 11 26 in Australia**)
- Contact the **13 HEALTH line** to talk to a registered nurse (**13 43 25 84 in Australia**)
- Take your child to the nearest hospital emergency department

When should you contact a doctor and get further help?

- Take your child to a doctor for further review:
 - If their pain is moderate to severe (more than mild)
 - If your child's mild pain lasts for more than a few hours
 - If your child is clearly unwell, or their condition is worsening
- Do not give pain medicine to your child for more than 48 hours without seeing a doctor

Questions to consider when talking with your health care provider

- Does my child **NEED** medicine for mild pain relief?
- What happens if my child **DOES** take medicine for mild pain relief?
- What happens if my child **DOES NOT** take medicine for mild pain relief?
- Am I clear about which **BENEFITS** and possible **HARMS** matter most to my child?
- Do I have enough **INFORMATION** and support to decide whether to give my child pain medicine?
- **OTHER:**
- **OTHER:**

References:

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