

Tips for Parents During the Acetaminophen and Ibuprofen Shortage

What you should know about fever and pain in children:

- Fever is a temperature of 100.4 F (38.0 C) or above.
- In older infants and children, we're more concerned about dehydration or difficulty breathing than the fever itself
- Call your pediatric team immediately for fever in infants less than three months old.
- If your child is sleeping or playing comfortably, you don't need to give them fever-reducing medicine. The medicine is most useful to treat discomfort.

If you have access to Ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil, other brands) or acetaminophen (Tylenol or other brands)

- Don't purchase more than a week's worth of fever-reducing medication. Leave enough on the shelves for other families with sick children.
- Don't use adult formulations (including cutting or crushing tablets) without talking to your pediatric team about safe dosing. It's important to give the dose based on the child's weight.
- You may use rectal suppositories of acetaminophen if available. Same dosing.
- Always check the dosing chart whether you're using a familiar product or a new brand.
- Don't give acetaminophen more often than every 4 hours (and no more than 5 doses a day).
- Don't give ibuprofen more often than every 6 hours (and no more than 4 doses a day).
- If you're also using over-the-counter cold medications, check they don't also contain acetaminophen or ibuprofen. You don't want to "double dose" the fever medication.

What do you do if you don't have acetaminophen or ibuprofen?

- Use baths to lower your child's temperature but do it safely:
 - **Yes: lukewarm baths.**
 - **No** cold baths. They cause shivering so can actually raise a child's temperature.
 - **No** alcohol baths. The alcohol can be absorbed through the skin and cause poisoning.
- **Never** give your child aspirin in order to bring down the fever, since it can cause Reye Syndrome, which is a deadly disease.
- Use cool wet compresses/washcloths between baths, especially on the forehead, the back of the neck, or the chest.
- Encourage your child to drink liquids frequently. The enemy is dehydration. If your child is not making a normal amount of urine, push more liquids. Juice, soup, or milk all work. Call the pediatric team if the amount of urine remains low.
- Popsicles are great ways to coax children to get more liquids in and cool down.

- Be careful of using herbal teas in children. The ingredients aren't FDA regulated and may cause harm to small children, whose metabolisms are different than adults.

What about other symptoms that these medications might treat?

- *For sore throat*, offer hot/cold fluids like milkshakes or lemon tea to soothe the pain.
- *For stuffy noses*: use a cool mist humidifier in your child's room and use salt-water drops in the nostrils to soften mucus (then remove it with a suction bulb).
- *For headaches and body aches* from viruses like influenza: use warm or cool compresses and massage the sore limb.

Call your healthcare team or go to the emergency room if your child is experiencing:

- Difficulty breathing
- Flu-like symptoms that improved but then returned worse
- Chest pain or pressure
- Confusion or worse-than-normal mental function
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Loss of appetite or refusal to eat or drink
- Decrease urine or wet diapers

If you are concerned your child swallowed too much medication or a medication harmful for children, it's always OK to call Poison Control at [1-800-222-1222](tel:1-800-222-1222).