

**Prescribing Tip No: 355**

**Date: 14<sup>th</sup> April 2022**

**Prescribing tip for information**

**Prescribing paracetamol for adult patients less than 50kg in weight.**

Paracetamol is an analgesic commonly used in the treatment of mild to moderate pain and pyrexia. It has analgesic and antipyretic properties but no useful anti-inflammatory properties. Standard recommended doses of paracetamol for people **aged 18 years and older** are

**By mouth - 500mg to 1g every 4 to 6 hours as required (maximum 4g in 24 hours).**

**By rectum - 500mg to 1g every 4 to 6 hours as required (maximum 4g in 24 hours).**

**When to consider a reduction in a paracetamol dose**

There are no specific contraindications to the use of paracetamol however **some patients may be at increased risk of experiencing toxicity at normal therapeutic doses.** These include patients with a **body weight of less than 50kg** and those with risk factors for hepatotoxicity.

Clinical judgement should be used to adjust the dose of paracetamol in these patients - prescribe paracetamol with caution and **consider a dose reduction if patient exhibits risk factors for hepatotoxicity and inadvertent paracetamol overdose.**<sup>(1)</sup>

Risk factors include

- **Body weight less than 50kg**
- Chronic alcohol consumption
- Chronic malnutrition
- Chronic dehydration
- Severe liver disease (the hazards of overdose are greater in people with non-cirrhotic alcoholic liver disease)
- Increasing age and /or frailty – a reduction in the clearance of paracetamol has been associated with increased age and frailty. Elderly patients may have comorbidities and polypharmacy which can further increase the risk of inadvertent paracetamol toxicity and overdose.
- Long term paracetamol use (especially in those who are malnourished)
- In combination with the use of liver enzyme inducing drugs (rifampicin, carbamazepine and phenytoin)

If risk factors are present

- Consider reducing the dose of paracetamol to a **maximum of 3g in 24 hours (eg 1g three times daily) or use 15mg / kg every 4 – 6 hours (maximum of 60mg/kg in 24 hours) as a guide.**
- Advise the patient that they have been prescribed a lower dose of paracetamol and advise caution when using over the counter paracetamol containing products that the recommended max total daily dosage must not be exceeded.
- NB. Details of the lower dose of paracetamol may not be covered in the manufacturers standard leaflet.

1. [Scenario: Paracetamol | Management | Analgesia - mild-to-moderate pain | CKS | NICE](#)

To contact the Medicines Optimisation Team please phone 01772 214302

If you have any suggestions for future topics to cover in our prescribing tips, please contact [Nicola.schaffel@nhs.net](mailto:Nicola.schaffel@nhs.net)