

PORTLAND PEDIATRIC GROUP, LLP

PAIN AND FEVER MEDICATIONS IN INFANTS

Parents of infants and young children should know what medicines to use for pain and fever, and in what dose. You may have noticed that the dosing chart printed on the infants' Tylenol box says "ask your doctor" for children under the age of 2. This is because weight, not age, determines the optimal dose. Since infants gain weight so quickly, this dose increases frequently as well. When pain and fever don't get better, a frequent cause is that parents aren't giving enough medicine.

So which medicine should you choose?

Tylenol (acetaminophen) has a long track record of safety in very young children. If you have a boy who was circumcised, you might recall him getting a dose before the procedure when he was only a day or two old. Tylenol treats pain and fever, and is a good choice for infants who are teething. An October 2009 study showed that Tylenol may reduce the effectiveness of vaccines, so discuss with your doctor whether your infant should receive any medication after shots. For dosing the infants' drops, see the attached chart. The Tylenol children's suspension has dosing instructions printed on the box.

Motrin and *Advil* (ibuprofen) treat pain and fever like Tylenol, but also treat inflammation. Therefore they provide superior symptom relief for pain from ear infections, sore throats, and musculoskeletal trauma. A few children who continue to take ibuprofen for a long time will have some stomach discomfort. This can usually be avoided by giving the medicine with food. Motrin/Advil should not be used in children under 6 months of age because their kidneys are not mature enough to eliminate the drug from their system. The infant drops (6 months-2 years) and children's suspension (2+ years) have dosing printed on the box.

Aspirin should NOT be used in patients under the age of 16, unless prescribed by your doctor to treat highly specific conditions. When kids take this medication, there is a slight risk of a rare disease called Reye syndrome that damages the liver and brain. A "baby aspirin" is just a smaller pill—it's not actually intended for babies!

Allergic reactions to these medications are exceedingly rare and are usually to one of the dyes in the liquid suspension. As with any medication, you should let us know if you suspect any kind of reaction. Symptoms such as wheezing or trouble breathing, facial swelling, or repeated vomiting require immediate medical attention.

A rectal temperature over 100°F in an infant younger than 3 months is an emergency and should prompt an immediate phone call to the doctor at any hour.