

Paracetamol: oral dosing for adults with low body weight

There are reports of liver failure after administration of oral paracetamol in adult patients with low body weight given the maximum recommended daily dose. In view of this, Sheffield Teaching Hospitals Foundation Trust (STHFT) Medicine Safety Committee recommends the following doses:

Patient weight	Oral/IV paracetamol dose
50Kg and over	1g every 4–6 hours, maximum 4g in 24 hours
40 - 49Kg	500mg every 4–6 hours, maximum 2g in 24 hours
under 40Kg	Dose to be individualised*

*Note – for further advice primary care clinicians are advised to contact their practice CCG Medicines Optimisation Team member or the team via email:
sheffieldccg.medicinesoptimisation@nhs.net

Implications for prescribing in primary care:

This change in dosage for adult patients with low body weight is a local STH recommendation. Most SmPCs for oral paracetamol preparations do not make this adjustment. The BNF states:

Some patients may be at increased risk of experiencing toxicity at therapeutic doses, particularly those with a body-weight under 50 kg and those with risk factors for hepatotoxicity. Clinical judgement should be used to adjust the dose of oral and intravenous paracetamol in these patients.

Where on-going treatment in primary care is required, clinicians are advised to continue the doses stated on the discharge communication for patients on lower than normal maximum doses.

Prescribers in primary care may also wish to consider lower maximum doses when initiating prescribing or recommending OTC paracetamol for their adult patients (aged 16 years and over) who are less than 50kg in weight and /or for those with risk factors for liver failure. For prescribing in those aged less than 16 years, please refer to the [BNFC](#).

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