

Acetaminophen may cause serious skin reactions

(Steven Johnson syndrome)

Acetaminophen is a widely used analgesic and anti-pyretic drug with no anti-inflammatory effects. It is the most common ingredient in US medications appearing more than 600 products. (1)

Although hypersensitivity to acetaminophen is rare, cutaneous reactions, such as urticaria, angioedema and maculopapular eruption, bronchospasm, and anaphylaxis have been described following exposure to the drug. Ingestion of acetaminophen has also been associated with systemic reactions, including vasculitis, hepatitis with glomerulonephritis. (1)

The FDA issued a warning in August,2013 that pain and fever reducer (acetaminophen) may cause Stevens-Johnson syndrome (SJS), toxic epidermal necrolysis (TEN), or acute generalized exanthematous pustulosis (AGEP), These conditions may be fatal and may emerge with flu-like symptoms, a rash, blisters, or shedding of layers of skin after a first or repeat dose of acetaminophen.(2)

Management of patients with Stevens-Johnson syndrome is usually provided in intensive care units or burn centers. No specific treatment of Stevens-Johnson syndrome is noted; therefore, most patients are treated symptomatically, actually like the treatment of patients with extensive burns. (3)

Recovery can take weeks or months according to the severity and the complications that include scarring changes in skin pigmentation, blindness and damage to internal organs. (2)

Prior to the FDA's new warning, a search of FAERS (FDA Adverse Event Reporting System)from 1969 to 2012 identified 91 cases of SJS/TEN and 16 cases of AGEP, which resulted in 67 hospitalizations and 12 deaths, "*The majority of the cases involved single-ingredient acetaminophen products.*" the agency note.(2)

*"Labels of medications containing acetaminophen will now carry warnings the drugs may cause serious skin reactions in rare cases", "anyone who develops a skin rash or reaction while using acetaminophen or any other pain reliever/fever reducer should **stop the drug** and seek medical attention right away. Anyone who has experienced a serious skin reaction with acetaminophen should not take the drug again and should contact their health care professional to discuss alternative pain relievers/fever reducers".* the FDA said.(4)

"This new information is not intended to worry consumers or health care professionals, nor is it meant to encourage them to choose other medications," Dr. Sharon Hertz, deputy director of FDA's Division of Anesthesia, Analgesia and Addiction, said in a written statement. "However, it is extremely important that people recognize and react quickly to the initial symptoms of these rare but serious, side effects, which are potentially fatal". (4)

In conclusion, Acetaminophen may causes serious skin reactions like Stevens-Johnson syndrome in rare cases , this condition may be fatal according to severity and complications associated with it, so need urgency treatment as soon as possible.

Referencing:

1. Eun-Jin Kim, Hyun Lim, et al. Rapid onset of Stevens-Johnson syndrome and toxic epidermal necrolysis after ingestion of acetaminophen. *asia pac allergy*.2014;4:68-72
2. Bridget M. Kuehn, MSJ.FDA: Acetaminophen May Trigger Serious Skin Problems. *JAMA*. 2013;310(8):785
3. C Stephen Foster, MD, FACS, FACR, FAAO.Stevens-Johnson Syndrome Treatment & Management.2013
<http://emedicine.medscape.com/article/1197450-treatment>
4. FDA Warns of Rare Acetaminophen Risk.2013
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