

Guidelines for the administration of rectal paraldehyde to children

This information leaflet provides general guidance for parents/carers whose child has been prescribed paraldehyde.

What is paraldehyde used for?

Paraldehyde is a medicine used in the emergency treatment of seizures (fits). It is given as an enema, which is a liquid inserted into the rectum (back passage).

Paraldehyde solution is not licensed, and is made up as a 'special' medicine. The leaflet **Unlicensed medicines – a guide for patients** has more information about unlicensed medicines. If you would like a copy, please ask your child's doctor, nurse or pharmacist. Alternatively you can call the medicines helpline (contact details at the end of this leaflet).

When should paraldehyde be used and at what dose?

Your child will have an emergency seizure plan advising you on how much medication to give them, and when to give it. You should carefully check what volume of the mixture to use, especially if you have a new prescription, as different mixtures may contain different concentrations (amounts) of paraldehyde.

What if more than the recommended dose is given?

Seek medical advice from your child's GP or from your nearest Emergency Department (A&E) immediately. Take the medicine container with you so that the doctor can see what has been given.

What are the possible side effects of paraldehyde?

Paraldehyde does not usually cause any side-effects. Some children may have a rash or irritation around their rectum after administration. Other side effects include drowsiness and (rarely) hypoventilation (breathing at a rate of less than 12 breaths per minute).

Your child's breath may smell of paraldehyde for a few hours after the treatment has been given. This is because of the way that it is broken down in the body, and is nothing to worry about.

If your child experiences any serious side effects, you should contact your doctor. If any of the side effects persist or become a problem, contact your child's GP.

Before giving paraldehyde

To administer paraldehyde, you will need the following equipment.

- A sealed bottle of pre-mixed 50:50 rectal paraldehyde solution (50% paraldehyde and 50% olive oil).
- A plastic syringe and plastic tubing (quill, rectal tubing or equivalent).
- Gloves (recommended) and also lubricating gel (if preferred), although neither of these are available on prescription.

Do not give this medicine to your child if he/she is allergic to it or any of its ingredients (hydroquinone and olive oil).

Do not give this medicine if the liquid turns brownish in colour, if it has a strong vinegar-like odour, or if the bottle has been opened.

Prior to the rectal paraldehyde being given, place your child in the recovery position as you would normally during a seizure. Lay the child on their left side – this will help the paraldehyde to be absorbed. With a small child it may be easier to administer the paraldehyde with the child either on their front or over your knee.

How should this medicine be given?

- Put on a pair of disposable plastic gloves (if available) or wash your hands with soap and water.
- Open a new sealed bottle of paraldehyde 50:50.
- Attach the plastic tube to the end of the syringe and draw the required volume into the syringe from the bottle.
- Do not leave the solution in the plastic syringe for any longer than 15 minutes as the paraldehyde will start to eat away at the plastic. If the mixture has been in the syringe for longer than this, throw away the syringe and solution and start again with a fresh syringe.
- If available, apply some lubricating gel onto the end of the tube.
- Gently push the plastic tube into the child's bottom, no further than two centimetres from the tip of the tube, and push the plunger of the syringe until it is empty (as instructed by the nursing staff.)
- Gently remove the plastic tube, holding the cheeks of the child's bottom together for a few minutes to prevent the solution escaping.
- Throw away the syringe, plastic tube, and gloves (if used), and wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water.
- If any paraldehyde gets into your eyes or on your skin, wash with cold water immediately. If irritation persists seek medical attention.

How should this medicine be stored?

The paraldehyde solution should be stored in its original container at room temperature, away from direct sunlight, heat and out of reach of children. The expiry date is printed on the container – do not use after this date. Any leftover paraldehyde should be returned to a local pharmacy to be discarded.

Do not store the paraldehyde liquid in rubber or plastic containers (like syringes, for example). Once the liquid is drawn up into the syringe, you should use it immediately. Once opened the bottle must be discarded and cannot be re-used.

How do I get more paraldehyde?

Your local pharmacy can order this medicine for you, but you will require a prescription from your child's GP. Remember to order more paraldehyde before you run out of your current supply.

Remember this leaflet only describes some of the possible effects of this medicine. If you have any further questions, please contact your child's GP or pharmacist.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about paraldehyde, please contact the Evelina London Medicines Helpline (below) or the paediatric epilepsy clinical nurse specialist at the Evelina London Children's Hospital on **t:** 020 7188 4588 (9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday).

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit **w:** www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/leaflets

Evelina London Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your child's medicines, please speak to the staff caring for them or contact our helpline.

t: 020 7188 3003 10am to 5pm, Monday to Friday **e:** letstalkmedicines@gstt.nhs.uk

Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

t: 020 7188 8801 (PALS) **e:** pals@gstt.nhs.uk
t: 020 7188 3514 (complaints) **e:** complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk

Language and accessible support services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch.

t: 020 7188 8815 **e:** languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk

NHS 111

Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day.

t: 111

NHS website

Online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you take control of your health and wellbeing.

w: www.nhs.uk

Was this leaflet useful?

We want to make sure the information you receive is helpful to you. If you have any comments about this leaflet, we would be happy to hear from you, fill in our simple online form, **w:** www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets, or **e:** patientinformationteam@gstt.nhs.uk

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