

Suspected NSAID and paracetamol allergy

This leaflet will answer some of the questions you may have about non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) and how we investigate a possible allergy to them. If you have any further questions, please speak to a nurse or doctor looking after you.

What are NSAIDs?

Your child has been referred to our Children's Drug Allergy Service because of a suspected allergic reaction to NSAIDs.

There are lots of drugs which are NSAIDs, including over-the-counter and prescribed drugs which are used to reduce pain, inflammation and fever. They include aspirin, ibuprofen, diclofenac, mefenamic acid and naproxen.

Paracetamol is not a member of the NSAID group but, because of its painkilling and fever-reducing properties, it is often discussed together with NSAIDs.

What kind of reactions can be caused by NSAIDs?

Your child can have a reaction to an NSAID even if they have taken it before without a problem.

Some reactions happen within minutes of taking the drug, and they can appear in different ways, for example, a red itchy rash, hives or swelling of the lips and around the eyes. Very rarely, some people can have a serious reaction called anaphylaxis. This affects breathing and blood circulation and can be life-threatening.

Other allergic reactions can take hours or days to appear. For example, an NSAID may trigger asthma flare in people who have asthma or nettle rash in people who have a skin condition called urticaria. Some people with nasal polyps are likely to have NSAID-sensitive asthma. However, this is extremely rare in children. Although NSAID reactions typically affect skin and airways, they occasionally cause problems with blood and internal organs such as liver and kidneys.

Children sometimes develop a flat red rash (maculopapular rash) after they have been given paracetamol or ibuprofen for a fever, or when they have a viral cold. This may not be an allergy, and in these cases, a drug provocation test helps us confirm if it is safe for a child to be given the medicine in future.

What will happen next?

There are no accurate blood or skin tests for the diagnosis of NSAID allergy. To confirm if your child is allergic to an NSAID, we will plan a drug provocation test in our Day Care Unit. This will involve giving your child incremental (increasing) doses of the relevant NSAID.

This test will be done under the close supervision of nurses, and a doctor will be available immediately if needed. If an allergic reaction occurs in your child, we will treat it straight away. Your child will remain under our care for two hours after the symptoms have been dealt with, or for two hours after the last dose of medicine if no symptoms were observed. In an unlikely case of a severe reaction, we may decide to keep your child under observation for longer and even admit them to hospital overnight. There is more information on drug allergy testing in our department, [w: www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/resources/patient-information/suspected-drug-allergy-investigation.pdf](http://www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/resources/patient-information/suspected-drug-allergy-investigation.pdf)

It is possible for your child to be allergic to just one drug from the NSAID family or to several. Your doctor may suggest testing more than one medicine to see if your child will be safe taking other drugs from this group. If your child proves to be allergic to more than one NSAID and requires an anti-inflammatory medication for their condition, such as rheumatoid disease, we will discuss this with you.

If none of the above options are suitable for your child and they still require NSAID treatment, your doctor will discuss desensitisation to the medicine with you. This involves the administration of multiple incremental doses over a day, with ongoing intake afterwards in order to maintain tolerance.

What shall I do until my child's NSAID allergy is confirmed?

Until it is determined if your child is allergic to NSAIDs, they must avoid all NSAIDs. Some over-the-counter medicines contain an NSAID, so always check with a pharmacist and read all medicine labels carefully.

What should I do if my child has fever or pain before testing?

If your child can cope with paracetamol, it can be used for treating fever or pain. Paracetamol can be repeated every 4-6 hours, with a maximum of four doses in 24 hours. In adolescents, codeine is occasionally used for analgesia.

How do I book a drug test appointment?

Please visit, [w: https://www.zesty.co.uk/practices/food-challenge](https://www.zesty.co.uk/practices/food-challenge) to book your child's drug allergy testing, as your doctor has recommended.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about the procedure, please contact one of the children's allergy nurses, [t: 020 7188 3300](tel:02071883300), Monday to Friday, or book a nurse telephone call back at, [w: https://www.zesty.co.uk/practices/children-allergy-nurse-helpline](https://www.zesty.co.uk/practices/children-allergy-nurse-helpline)

If you would like to cancel or change your child's drug allergy testing appointment, please go to [w: https://www.zesty.co.uk/practices/food-challenge](https://www.zesty.co.uk/practices/food-challenge) or telephone our day case coordinator, [t: 020 7188 6390](tel:02071886390).

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit [w: www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets](http://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets)

Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.

t: 020 7188 8748, Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm

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 **w:** 111.nhs.uk

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

Get involved and have your say: become a member of the Trust

Members of Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust contribute to the organisation on a voluntary basis. We count on them for feedback, local knowledge and support. Membership is free and it is up to you how much you get involved. To find out more, please get in touch.

t: 0800 731 0319 **e:** members@gstt.nhs.uk **w:** www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/membership

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

Leaflet number: 4735/VER1

Date published: May 2019

Review date: May 2022

© 2019 Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust

A list of sources is available on request