

BRIEFING TO LINCOLNSHIRE SCHOOLS: PARACETAMOL 'CHALLENGE'

A supposed social media 'challenge' is circulating, widely reported in August 2023, that encourages teenagers to overdose on paracetamol in a bid to win a competition. The 'craze' involves teenagers taking dangerous amounts of the painkiller to see who can stay in hospital the longest.

Donna Jones, chair of the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC), told Radio 4's Today programme on Tuesday 15 August that teenagers in Southampton had taken part in the dangerous challenge, taking the pills to see who could stay in hospital for the longest time.

She also called on TikTok to do more to prevent these challenges, although the social media site said it had seen 'no evidence to support these claims'.

How much paracetamol is safe for a child?

The [NHS website](#) states that children should be given no more than 4 doses of paracetamol in 24 hours, with a wait of at least 4 hours between doses.

Depending on a child's age, the NHS also has a handy guide on just how much paracetamol to give them if they are ill:

Age	How much	How often
6 to 8 years	250mg	Max 4 times in 24 hours
8 to 10 years	375mg	Max 4 times in 24 hours
10 to 12 years	500mg	Max 4 times in 24 hours
12 to 16 years	750mg	Max 4 times in 24 hours

As with any medication, painkillers should always be stored safely and where children cannot access them freely. Children under 16 cannot buy paracetamol in stores in the UK and should only be given them under the supervision of a parent, legal guardian or qualified health professional.

What are the dangers of taking too much paracetamol?

Taking too much paracetamol can be harmful to someone's health and cause damage to their liver.

The [NHS website](#) states that:

Specific signs of paracetamol poisoning include:

- yellowing of the skin and the whites of the eyes (jaundice)
- loss of co-ordination
- low blood sugar (hypoglycaemia), which can cause symptoms including sweating, trembling and irritability.

What should you do if you suspect an overdose?

The NHS says:

Go to 111.nhs.uk or call 111.

If you need to take your child to A&E, take the paracetamol packet or leaflet plus any remaining medicine with you.

If you suspect someone has taken an overdose, seek medical help immediately, by calling for an ambulance or by taking them to A&E.

Further support for schools in Lincolnshire

Lincolnshire education professionals can access advice and guidance around how to support young people from any of the following:

- [Healthy Minds Lincolnshire](#)
- [Mental Health Support Teams \(MHSTs\)](#)
- Calling the [Lincolnshire Here4You Advice Line](#) on 0800 234 6342.