

Recently the FDA decided to consider issuing increased restrictions on the use of acetaminophen in products. Acetaminophen is the active ingredient in the medication Tylenol. It is also used in a wide variety of other medications from cold medicines to allergy medications.

The reason for the concern is that acetaminophen can cause liver damage. In fact acetaminophen toxicity is the leading cause of liver failure in the United States. It seems that because Tylenol is such a common and readily available product, people assume it is completely safe. So safe, that they don't feel it is necessary to heed the dosage recommendation on the label. Many people who don't feel better after they take the recommended dosage, will take additional pills under the assumption that they are perfectly safe.

Another problem is that because acetaminophen is used in many other products, people might take multiple different medications without realizing that they also contain acetaminophen. By doing so they are at risk of over-dosing.

The liver is the primary organ for eliminating toxins in the body. It uses various enzymes to break down unnatural chemicals like acetaminophen. There is a limited quantity of liver enzymes. The more chemicals that the body has to eliminate, the greater the chance it will use up these enzymes. All types of chemicals use these enzymes including a variety of medications as well as alcohol. If the enzymes are used up, then toxins can build up in the body. The first part of the body that is typically damaged by these chemicals is the liver.

No drugs are completely safe, even over the counter drugs. Just because something is available in the local drug store, doesn't mean it is harmless. Always remember to read the label and always consider the cumulative affect that different drugs can have in the body and on the liver.