

What teens don't know about OTC medications can hurt them

4 May 2009

Teens, who are starting to make more decisions about their own health care, may not know enough about over-the-counter pain medications to avoid complications or inadvertent misuse.

A University of Rochester Medical Center study surveyed almost 100 young people between 14 and 20 years old and found that the average score on series of questions about knowledge of over-the-counter medication was 44 percent. Despite that obvious knowledge gap, more than 75 percent of them had taken over-the-counter medications in the previous month.

"This tells health professionals that we need to teach our young people about safe use of over-the-counter pain medications," said Karen Wilson, M.D., M.P.H., senior instructor of [Pediatrics](#) and author of the abstract at the Pediatric Academic Society meeting in Baltimore today.

The [teens](#) reported that they most often took Tylenol and ibuprofen. Although 35 percent of the teens reported knowing what [acetaminophen](#) was, 37 percent of these teens did not correctly identify acetaminophen and Tylenol as the same medication.

"Taken properly, acetaminophen is a safe and effective medication, but chronic misuse and overdoses can cause liver damage," Wilson said. "Plus, they are in a lot of compound medications that include acetaminophen and ibuprofen, so it's easy to accidentally take a more than you should."

Source: University of Rochester [Medical](#) Center ([news](#) : [web](#))

APA citation: What teens don't know about OTC medications can hurt them (2009, May 4) retrieved 5 August 2022 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2009-05-teens-dont-otc-medications.html>

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