

SERIES: “FIP CPD Bite series on paediatric pain and fever management”

Date of release 30/09/2024

PURPOSE: To equip pharmacists with the knowledge required to manage paediatric pain and fever in a community pharmacy setting, focusing on age-specific pain management, practical advice on non-prescription medicines, and strategies for effective communication with parents and caregivers.

KEY POINTS/HIGHLIGHTS

Episode 1: Understanding paediatric pain and fever

- Effective management is essential to prevent under-treatment, which can lead to chronic pain, or over-treatment, causing adverse effects.
- Pain in children can be nociceptive (somatic or visceral) or non-nociceptive (neuropathic or functional), and fever is typically a physiological response to infection, usually harmless unless accompanied by red flags.
- Recognising red flags such as persistent or worsening pain, systemic symptoms like fever and drowsiness, or inconsolable infants is crucial for timely referrals.
- Pain assessment differs by age; infants rely on non-verbal cues, while older children can verbalise their pain more effectively, and psychological factors should always be considered

Episode 2: Managing pain and fever across age groups

- Paracetamol is safe from birth and should be dosed at 15 mg/kg every 4-6 hours, while ibuprofen can be safely used in children over 3 months, dosed at 10 mg/kg every 6 hours.
- Alternating paracetamol and ibuprofen can lead to confusion and dosing errors; parents should log dosages and administer every 3 hours if needed.
- Different dosage forms should be considered based on the child's age, with suspensions preferred for infants and chewable tablets or dissolvable packets for older children.
- Educating caregivers on correct dosing, administration techniques, and when to seek further medical advice is essential for safe medication use in children.

Episode 3: Practical strategies and case scenarios for supporting care across age transitions in children

- Pharmacists play a vital role in supporting care during the transitions between age groups, and they should engage older children in discussions about their treatment as they transition from infancy to adolescence, addressing their changing attitudes and psychosocial factors.
- Knowing when to refer a child for medical care is critical; for example, infants with fevers above 39°C, children less than 2 years with fevers lasting more than 24 hours, or any child with a fever of 40°C or higher should be referred for further evaluation.
- Effective home management of pain and fever includes proper hydration, rest, and age-appropriate medications. Pharmacists should guide caregivers on these strategies to ensure safety and efficacy in treatment.
- Practical strategies should be tailored to the child's age and specific symptoms, using real-life case scenarios, such as managing ear pain with ibuprofen or treating ankle injuries with the RICE method, to ensure effective care.
- Engaging in age-appropriate communication fosters trust and compliance, allowing pharmacists to better support children and their families in health management.

*You can obtain an acknowledgement of participation from the link below the video on YouTube:
https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLXg_1uVlPtYcCWhAjc6jazza3ZnuIPH_1

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IMPLICATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS/CALL TO ACTION

- Comprehensive training programmes should be implemented to improve healthcare providers' ability to recognise and manage paediatric pain and fever.
- Standardised pain assessment tools, such as FLACC and Wong-Baker FACES, should be used across all age groups to ensure consistent and accurate evaluation of pain.
- Pharmacists should receive ongoing training focused on age-specific pharmacokinetics, communication strategies, and recognising when to refer a child for medical attention.
- Pharmacists should actively educate parents and caregivers on the safe use of over-the-counter medications, including proper dosing, administration technique and when to seek medical advice.
- Healthcare settings should adopt standardised, evidence-based guidelines to ensure consistent and best-practice care for managing pain and fever in children.
- Digital health tools could be explored to support caregivers in monitoring symptoms and adhering to treatment plans for better health outcomes.

OTHER FIP RESOURCES

- FIP self-care microsite: <https://selfcare.fip.org/pain-about/>
- FIP–WHO technical guidelines: Points to consider in the provision by health-care professionals of children-specific preparations that are not available as authorised products: <https://www.fip.org/file/1556>
- FIP events that have covered topics on pain: <https://events.fip.org/previous-fip-digital-events/>
- FIP Guidelines on Pharmaceutical Research in Paediatric Patients: <https://www.fip.org/file/1533>
- Pediatric oral extemporaneous preparations and practices: International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) global study: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0939641124003096>

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