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DIE FROM A HEADACHE?

By: Harvey Diamond

Have you ever heard of acetaminophen? Well, if you haven't, you had better brace yourself. According to the poison control centers in the United States, acetaminophen fatalities dominate statistics gathered by the Poison Control Center in the U.S. It kills more than cocaine or prescription narcotics. Acetaminophen is the top killer. It also has destroyed the livers of hundreds and hundreds of victims, young, very young, and old. Now, you might be saying, "I don't even know what acetaminophen is. I've never heard of it." Well, perhaps you're familiar with its more common name—Tylenol®. WHAT!? Tylenol®? Yup. Acetaminophen is the active ingredient in Tylenol® and, although some 200 products contain some acetaminophen, Tylenol® holds an overwhelming share of the acetaminophen market; and if it's not taken in the exact correct dosage, with precious little leeway, it can destroy your liver or kill you. Didn't know that about Tylenol®, did you?

There are over 56,000 emergency room visits a year due to acetaminophen overdoses. There are also over 100 deaths and that number is acknowledged to be a severe underestimate because hospitals are not required to report unintentional poisonings, only the intentional ones. People often attempt suicide by swallowing handfuls of acetaminophen. In fact, that got to be such a problem in England that it now restricts how many tablets can be sold at once.

And acetaminophen is the leading single cause of acute liver failure, the most severe

type of liver damage. More harm is done to the liver by acetaminophen than any other liver-harming medication or disease.

Lacy Keele was only five years old when her mother gave her four Extra Strength Tylenol® in one day for the flu. The label calls for only two in one day. The two extra tablets destroyed her liver, and within a week she was dead. Although a jury found Tylenol® to be the cause of her death, Johnson & Johnson, Tylenol®'s manufacturer, was let off because her parents were adequately informed of the risks on the label.

Antonio Benedi was an aide to President George Bush Sr. In 1993 he had wine with his dinner and over the next four days took 10 Extra Strength Tylenol®, or 2½ a day for four days. He went into a coma and was saved only by a liver transplant. He sued and was awarded \$8 million from Johnson & Johnson who has paid out many millions of dollars in legal settlements, mostly in out-of-court settlements that require the plaintiffs to keep their mouth shut about it.

By the way, everything I'm telling you about Tylenol® and acetaminophen, I took from an interview entitled "Johnson & Johnson's Dirty Little Secret" which appeared in *Forbes Magazine* on January 12, 1998, page 42. Since *Forbes* is one of the more highly respected periodicals in the country, they were granted an interview with the Johnson & Johnson brain trust.



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“... acetaminophen is the leading single cause of acute liver failure . . .”



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The article gave the answer to two questions that to this day I can hardly believe were given **knowing** they were going to end up in print for all the world to read. See if you don't agree.

The first question asked of Johnson & Johnson was, "Why not warn people about possible liver failure?" Johnson & Johnson's answer was, "Organ specific warnings would confuse people." So, Johnson & Johnson would rather you go into a coma from liver failure than confuse you on their labels. Let me ask you a question. If you picked up a bottle of Tylenol® and in bright red letters it exclaimed, "This product can destroy your liver." would that confuse you? For years the by-line for Tylenol® has been how gentle it is on the stomach, at one point saying, "Nothing Safer." What do they mean nothing safer? Does that include mother's milk, watermelon juice, or distilled water? So it's perfectly clear and okay to tell us that nothing's safer for the stomach, but it's confusing to say it could destroy your liver?

It was the answer to the second question that sent me reeling and gasping for air. The question from Forbes was, "Well then, why not talk about the risk of death?" Their answer defies all reason. This is what Johnson & Johnson answered **knowing** the answer would be put into print, "That would promote sui-

cides. If people knew that acetaminophen was potentially dangerous they might find it a convenient means to depart this world." GOOD GRIEF!

So, let's see, Johnson & Johnson's concern lies with the tiny percentage of people who **want** to depart this world, and the huge majority of people who want to stick around and see how it ends—well—they're on their own.

Four and a half years after the Forbes interview, McNeil Consumer & Specialty Pharmaceuticals, Tylenol®'s maker, stated that they would place new warnings on all its acetaminophen products to say that "taking an over-dose may cause liver damage." I wonder how long they'll wait to mention that it can also kill you.

Listen, if you or a loved one find yourself in need of some kind of pain relief from an over-the-counter remedy, for goodness sake, read the label and don't take any products with acetaminophen. However, be forewarned that, for obvious reasons, it is often listed in such fine print that you will need an electron microscope to find it. Also, because acetaminophen is in so many different products, even ones you may not expect will contain it; taking a few different remedies the same day can mean unknowingly ingesting potentially toxic amounts. 🙄

Bio:

Harvey Diamond is the author of the best selling series of *FIT FOR LIFE* books. His latest work, *LIVING WITHOUT PAIN*, is the culmination of 36 years of research. A free 60 minute CD is available discussing the healthy, pain-free lifestyle we all desire. Visit www.fitforlifetime.com or call toll free 877-335-1509 for a copy. For more info contact me at info@vpnutrition.com.

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