

Reye's (Ryes) syndrome is a rare but serious condition that causes swelling in the liver and brain. Reye's syndrome most often affects children and teenagers recovering from a viral infection, most commonly the flu or chickenpox. Aspirin has been linked with Reye's syndrome, so use caution when giving aspirin to children or teenagers. Though aspirin is approved for use in children older than age 2, children and teenagers recovering from chickenpox or flu-like symptoms should NEVER take aspirin.

The signs and symptoms of Reye's syndrome typically appear about three to five days after the onset of a viral infection, such as the flu (influenza) or chickenpox, or an upper respiratory infection, such as a cold. Initial signs and symptoms may include continuous vomiting, lethargy, and unusual sleepiness. As the condition progresses, signs and symptoms may become more serious, including: irritable, aggressive or irrational behavior, seizures, weakness, paralysis of arms and legs, confusion, disorientation or hallucinations. These symptoms require emergency treatment. Early diagnosis and treatment of Reye's syndrome can save a child's life. If you suspect that your child has Reye's syndrome, it's important to act quickly.

Always check the label before you give your child medication, including over-the-counter products and alternative or herbal remedies. Aspirin can show up in some unexpected places, such as Alka-Seltzer and Pepto-Bismol. Sometimes aspirin goes by other names, too, such as: acetylsalicylic acid, acetylsalicylate, salicylic acid, and salicylate. If your child has the flu, chickenpox or another viral illness, use other medications — such as acetaminophen (Tylenol, others), ibuprofen (Advil, Children's Motrin, Motrin IB, others) or naproxen (Aleve) — to reduce high fever or relieve pain.

If you have questions regarding the use of aspirin for your child contact your healthcare provider. If suspect your child has Reye's Syndrome he/she requires immediate medical care.