

Prevention measures taken by medicines agencies: are they effective?

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Responding to ISMP Canada' call:

"Acetaminophen-Related Harm: A Call for Improved Product Packaging" ISMP Canada Safety Bulletin September 7, 2023; 23 (8): 1-5.

TABLE 1. Pack sizes of acetaminophen products for adults in select countries. (Note: units represent tablets or capsules; ● represents 10 units).

Country (year restrictions effective)	Restrictions on pack sizes and retail settings	Comparative pack sizes of acetaminophen products sold in pharmacies
United Kingdom (1998) ^{7,8}	 Up to 16 units per package sold in non-pharmacy settings Up to 32 units per package sold in pharmacies 	••
Denmark (2013) ⁹	Up to 10 units per package sold in non-pharmacy settings Up to 20 units per package sold in pharmacies	•
Australia (2025) ¹⁰	 Up to 16 units per package sold in supermarkets Up to 50 units per package sold in pharmacies, without supervision of a pharmacist Up to 100 units per package sold in pharmacies, under the supervision of a pharmacist 	••••
Canada (2003) ¹¹	No pack size or retail setting restriction for immediate-release acetaminophen Examples (immediate-release): 65 g (200 units/bottle × 325 mg/unit) 500 g (2 bottles × 500 units/bottle × 500 mg/unit) Up to 50 units per package (or up to 650 mg per unit) of sustained-release formulations, sold in non-pharmacy settings	

Note: Canadian products for infants and children have limited quantities of acetaminophen to reduce the risk of harm with accidental overdose.³

TABLE 1 (continued). Pack sizes of paracetamol products for adults in select countries.

Country (year restrictions effective)	Restrictions on pack sizes and retail settings	Comparative pack sizes of acetaminophen products sold in pharmacies
Finland (1976)	• Up to 6 g per package only sold in pharmacies (12 units)	
France (1981)	• Up to 8 g per package only sold in pharmacies (16 units)	



Reducing the size reduces the risk of life-threatening overdoses

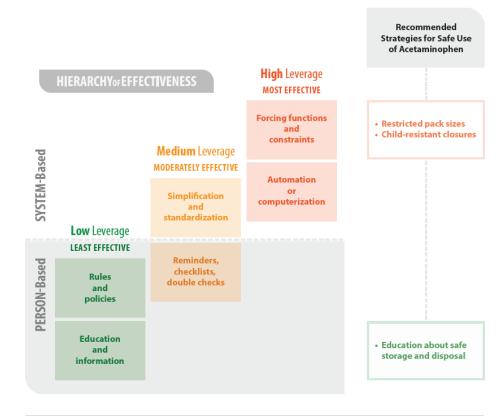


FIGURE 2. The key recommended strategies for safe use of acetaminophen are listed on the right alongside the Hierarchy of Effectiveness. 18 which helps to illustrate relative impact with system improvement.

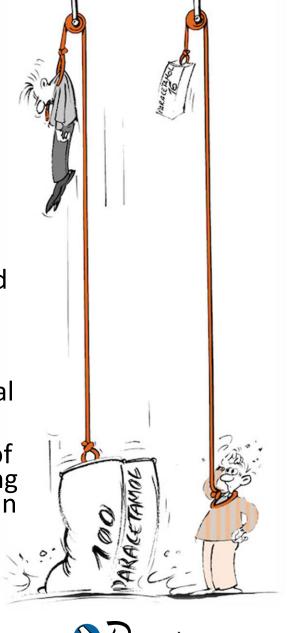
Health impact assessed only in the UK

21% lower incidence of suicide deaths attributed to paracetamol in England and Wales (p = 0.01)

30% reduction in hospital admissions

66% fall in the number of liver transplants following paracetamol overdoses in liver transplant centres

Prescrire Editorial Staff "Safety of paracetamol packaging in the United Kingdom" *Prescrire International* 2001; **10** (56): 189.





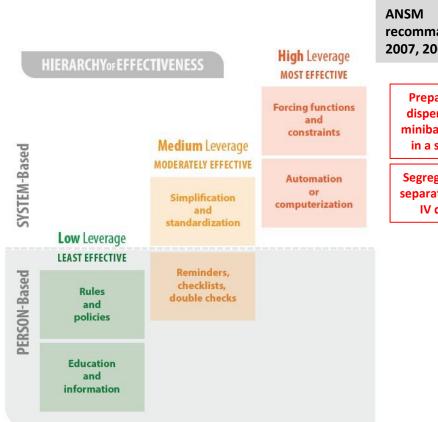
risk minimization measures



Issues from the systematic assessment of error risks related to new drugs and to packaging, naming, labeling, dosing devices, etc. by the Prescrire's Packaging Working Group

- Vinca alkaloids
- Weekly oral methotrexate
- Colchicine drug packaging
- Paracetamol IV for weighting 10 kg/or
- Withdrawal of premixe police injectable solute

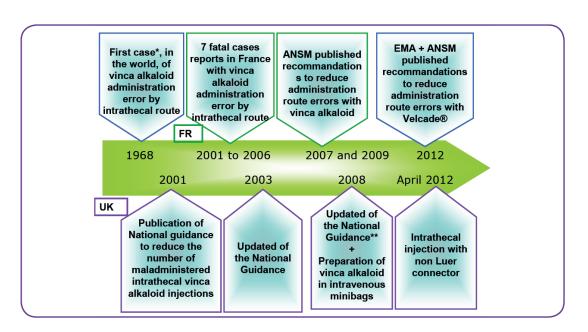
Vinca alkaloids in a minibag, never in a syringe



ANSM recommandations 2007, 2009, 2013

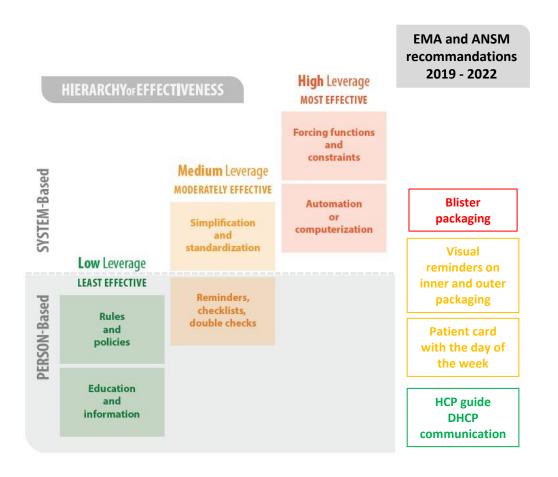
Prepare and dispense in a minibag, never in a syringe

Segregate and separate IT and IV drugs

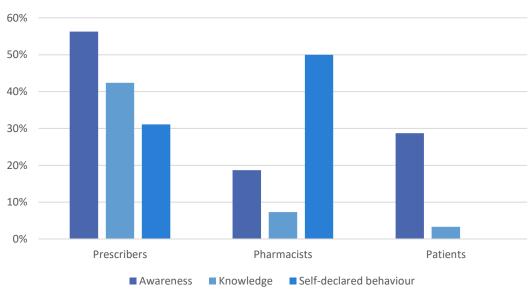


- 18 December 2008: last deadly French case of vincristine IR by syringe prepared by the hospital pharmacy and presented on the same tray
- 2 cases of error in 2013 linked to administration of IV drugs (unspecified) through the tubing of an external ventricular shunt (IT route)

Improving oral methotrexate packaging safety



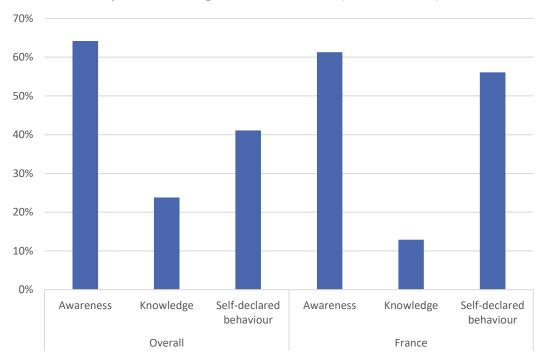
Outcome (minimum required number of correct or desirable answers / total number of questions)



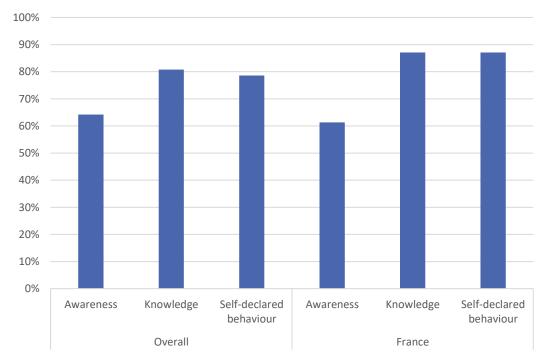
Lysen T and coll "Impact of European Union label changes to avoid inadvertent use of medicinal products containing methotrexate for once-weekly administration: A survey amongst prescribers, pharmacists and patients on awareness, knowledge, and behaviour" *Pharmacoepidemiol Drug Saf.* 2023 Sep 3

EMA / IQVIA survey results: prescribers

Prescribers to provide dosing instructions and information about overdose symptoms for once-weekly, oral and parenteral, methotrexate to the patient/caregiver at each visit (Q1/Q6/Q10)

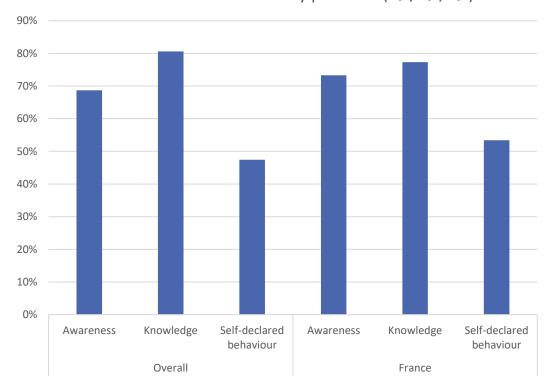


Prescribers to write down the day of the week the patient should take the once-weekly dose of, oral and parenteral, methotrexate in each new prescription (Q1/Q6/Q11)



EMA / IQVIA survey results: phamacists

Pharmacists always or frequently note down the day of the week to take methotrexate on the outer packaging of methotrexate once weekly products (Q3/Q5/Q9)







Still room for improvement...

In France, mid 2023, still no:

- calendar or patient pack fitted to monthly needs
- recommendation for single-dose blister packs with a weekly dose reminder on each dose; and a safety film (and even still a bulk vial!)
- electronic hard stop verification & alerts concerning oral methotrexate indication and doses in prescribing and dispensing software (since 2004 in the UK)
- follow-up sheet to enable patient interaction with caregivers at treatment renewals (since 2004 in UK)

Infos-Patients Prescrire

us tones mos-ranents rescrive sont un support di communication entre les professionnels de santé es patients et leur entourage, à reproduire, à adapte annoter, à expliquer et commenter.

rité sont à mettre en œuvre lors d'un traitement pa

Un médicament qui diminue les défenses

- comme immunodépresseur à raison d'une seule dose
- raison d'effets indésirables narfois prayes. Ce sont no tamment des atteintes des cellules du sang, des troubles du fonctionnement des reins, du foie, des poumons et aussi des diarrhées, des plaies de la peau ou des mu-queuses. Les effets indésirables du *méthotrexate* aug-mentent avec la dose et aussi dans certaines maladies des reins. Le méthotrexate ne doit pas être pris en cas
- Certains médicaments risquent d'augmenter la toxicité du méthotrexate ou de freiner son élimination par les reins : ils sont à éviter tant que possible. C'est le cas et autres), de certains médicaments qui diminuent la pression artérielle ou de certains anti-infectieux. Demanconseil à un professionnel de santé avant de prendre

- Des personnes ont été gravement intoxiquées suite conséquence d'une erreur qui a conduit à prendre le méthotrexate chaque jour au lieu d'une seule fois par
- Il est important de repérer à temps les principau signes évocateurs d'une surdose : plaie de la peau ou des muqueuses (notamment dans la bouche), diarrhée fièvre, toux sèche, essoufflement,

- dieuses, contribuent à garantir la sécurité des personn
- Noter sur la boîte le jour de la semaine pour la pris du méthotrexate, le nombre de comprimés à prendre e la date de la première prise. – Tenir à jour, à chaque prise, une fiche de suivi indiqu
- le nombre initial de comprimés, le nombre de comprimé pris et le nombre de comprimés restant dans la boîte. bliée sans avoir recompté le nombre de comprime restant dans la boîte. En cas de doute, il est préférable
- de ne pas reprendre le méthotrexate.

 Signaler immédiatement à un médecin l'apparition de troubles susceptibles d'être un signe de surdose.
- Informer tous les professionnels de santé consulté que l'on prend du méthotrexate une fois par se maine. Conserver l'ordonnance et les résultats d'ana lyses biologiques, et les présenter en cas d'hospitalisation ou de consultation en précisant le jour de la prise.

Toutes les fiches Infos-Patients Prescrire dans





Prescrire

METROTREKATE ACCORD 10 mg

Exp. 04/2024

ACCORD 10 mg

comprimé

Méthotrexate

METHOTREXATE

ACCORD 10 mg,

Lot: GJ20253

Exp: 04/2024

METHOTREXATE ACCORD 10 mg,

Méthotrexate

METHOTREXATE

ACCORD 10 mg.

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Exp: 04/2024

ACCORD 10 mg.

Méthotrexate Lot: GJ20253

Exp: 04/2024

METHOTREXATE

ACCORD 10 mg.

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Méthotrexate

METHOTREXATE

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METHOTREXATE

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Lot: GJ20253

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METHOTREXATE

ACCORD 10 mg

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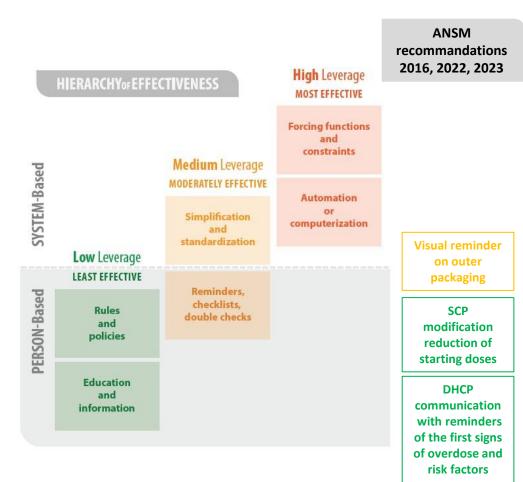
Exp: 04/2024

Lot: GJ20253

Exp: 04/2024

Prescrire Rédaction "Méthotrexate hebdomadaire par voie orale: modestes progrès en France pour prévenir les erreurs" Rev Prescrire 2023 ; 43 (477) : 502-503.

Colchicine, a silent killer



29 April 2015 - Administration of a fatal overdose of colchicine to a child

- A 4-year-old child weighing 16 kg was admitted to hospital for unexplained fever. Pericarditis was diagnosed and colchicine was prescribed at a dose of 0.5 mg per day for familial Mediterranean fever. Instead, the child received a dose of 0.5 "mg per kg per day" (8 mg per day) for two consecutive days, and thus a total of 16 mg of colchicine, leading to death 48 hours after.
- The large quantity of colchicine available on the paediatric ward resulted from commercial packages in the absence of a unit-dose drug distribution system.

5 May 2023 - University Hospital, two doctors found guilty of manslaughter

- the cardio-paediatrician prescriber: one-year suspended prison sentence because she had not written the prescription, nor had she properly "supervised" the intern
- the head clinic manager: six-month suspended prison sentence because "failing to supervise" the intern and did not verify the prescription
- the nurse who administered the drug: acquitted because she "could not have known that this medication was dangerous", and "there was no alert on the pharmacy software"
- the university hospital: fined 225,000 euros

Prescrire Editorial Staff "Death of a child from a colchicine overdose" *Prescrire Int* 2017; **26** (187): 166-167.

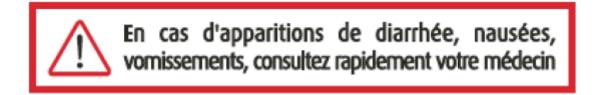
Pharmacovigilance and toxicovigilance assessment of the 2016 ANSM DHPC

			starting does, advise t	
All cases, including: serious cases from the National Pharmacovigilance Database (BNPV) linked to colchicine overdose AND cases involving	Period P1 (01/12/2012 to 30/06/2016)	Period P2 (01/07/2016 to 31/01/2020)	starting dose; advice to use the lowest effective dose DHCP reminding the first signs of overdose and the risk factors	
exposure to colchicine, recorded in the National Intoxication Case Database (SICAP)	43 months	43 months	evolution	
Deliberate events	266	309	16%	
suicide, suicidal behavior	161	175	9%	
drug misuse/overdose/self-medication	104	130	25%	
substance abuse/addiction	1	4	300%	
Adverse drug reactions	76	74	-3%	
Unintentional events	385	431	12%	
medication errors	343	377	10%	
lack of risk perception	42	54	29%	
Total	727	814	12%	

Modification of the Summary of Product Characteristics (SPC): reduction in the recommended

Still room for improvement...

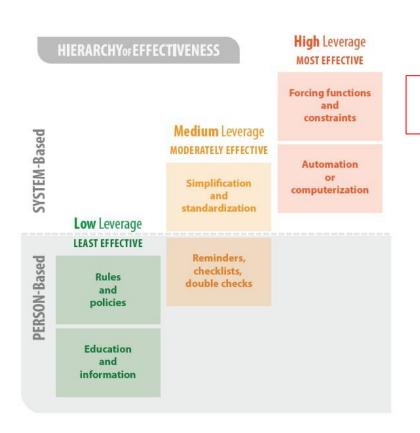
- New 2023 ANSM measures: visual reminder on diarrhoea new reduction of starting doses
- But still no constraints:
 - 0.5mg tablets dosage, requiring tablets to be cut
 - package size adapted to dosing regimens
- And an ever-increasing number of indications inducing more risks





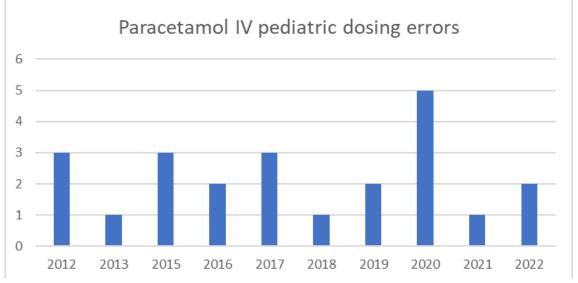
Beyond a trivial medicine, beware of colchicine deadly risks!

Paracetamol IV: for children weighting 10 kg or less, use 10 mL containers



Dispense only 10 mL containers





Prescrire Rédaction "Paracétamol IV et surdoses : chez les enfants pesant 10 kg ou moins, employer des conditionnements de 10 ml" *Rev Prescrire* 2023 ; **43** (475) : 349.

Paracetamol IV: a dangerous and confusing mention on 50 mL bags

Misleading statement:

"suitable for patients weighing less than 33 kg"





Paracétamol

Adapté aux patients de moins de 33 kg

10 mg / ml 500 mg - 50 ml

Solution pour perfusion IV

Poids du patient	Volume maximal	
10 kg	7,5 ml	

Acétate de sodium trihydraté, acide acétique glacial et hydroxyde de sodium 1N (pour ajustement du pH), eau PPI. Excipient à effet notoire : sodium.

Après ouverture du suremballage (ou dilution), une utilisation immédiate est recommandée.

À usage unique. Lire la notice avant utilisation. Ne pas mettre au réfrigérateur. Ne pas congeler.

Tenir hors de la vue et de la portée des enfants.

RESPECTER LES DOSES PRESCRITES

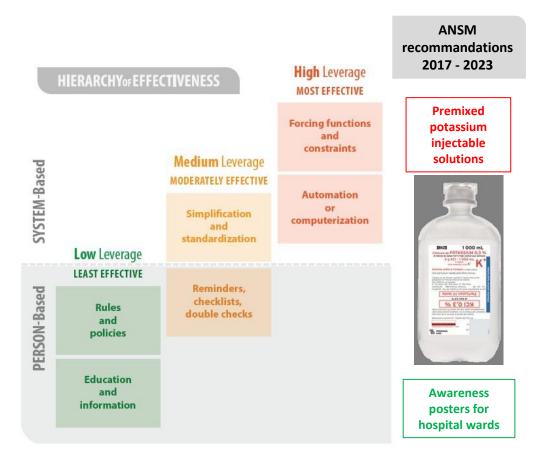
Réservé à l'usage hospitalier. Liste I. Uniquement sur ordonnance.

CIP 34009 576 902 4 3





Premixed potassium injectable solutions withdrawn in France, no longer promoted



- 2012 concentrated potassium administration in error classified as a 'never event' by the French Ministry of Health
- 2015 IV potassium only available on prescription
- 2015 marketing autorisation granted to 1L and 0.5L bags of KCl NaCl Kabi 0.3% 0.9% sol inj
- 2017 French Medicine Agency (ANSM) called to "prefer premixed potassium IV bags"
- Mid 2020: cessation of the marketing of the product due to a lack of buyers
 Fresenius Kabi has informed the ANSM that it will stop the marketing of the product Chlorure de potassium 0,3 % et chlorure de sodium 0,9 % Kabi° "due to low sales volumes"
- 2022: protest by Prescrire and some subscribers

Prescrire Rédaction "Potassium injectable prédilué prêt à perfuser : une barrière de sécurité à remettre d'urgence à disposition" *Rev Prescrire* 2022 ; **42** (463) : 339-340.



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