

# Paracetamol 'no better than a placebo' for treatment of back pain despite being recommended by doctors for years

- Paracetamol does not alleviate back pain or speed recovery, according to a new study
- This is first study comparing effectiveness of paracetamol and placebos
- Paracetamol is the first thing prescribed by doctors for treating back pain

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Paracetamol, which is commonly prescribed to treat back pain, is ineffective in treating the ailment, with no more success in alleviating pain or speeding recovery than a placebo.

Guidelines for treating back pain universally recommend the drug and Panadol sells a paracetamol product specifically targeting back pain.

However, until now, no study had ever tested the effectiveness of paracetamol in treating back pain, compared to a placebo.

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A new study has found that paracetamol is ineffective in treating back pain, despite being recommended by doctors as the first line of treatment for the ailment

A University of Sydney study, published today in *The Lancet*, tested more than 1,600 people with acute uncomplicated lower back pain and found that no matter how much paracetamol was taken by participants it did not assist with recovery.

Researchers said they were 'very surprised' by the results, which contradicted common medical guidelines.

Paracetamol is commonly prescribed to treat back pain. Panadol even has a product, whose active ingredient is paracetamol, that directly targets back and neck pain

For the study, participants were split into three groups – the first group took a placebo, the second took paracetamol whenever they experienced pain, and the third group was treated with paracetamol three times a day.

The researchers expected to notice an improvement in reported pain among the third group, working on the hypothesis that many patients don't find paracetamol effective because they take inadequate quantities of the drug.

However, the researchers found that no matter how much paracetamol was taken by participants it made no difference to pain relief or speed of recovery.

Approximately half of the participants in the study recovered within two weeks and the most significant factor in recovery seemed to be whether or not they resumed normal physical activities, with patients who resumed



physical activity faring better than those who did not.

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