



REYE'S SYNDROME

Reye's Syndrome is a very serious disease that you should know about. Some people develop Reye's Syndrome as they are getting over a viral illness, such as the flu or chicken pox. Reye's Syndrome usually affects people from infancy through young adulthood; however, **no age group is immune**. Although Reye's generally occurs when someone is recovering from any viral illness, it can develop 3 to 5 days after the onset of the illness. Its main targets are the liver and brain, it is noncontagious, and too often is misdiagnosed as encephalitis, meningitis, diabetes, poisoning, drug overdose, or sudden infant death.

Early diagnosis is crucial. An individual should be watched during the next 2 to 3 weeks following a viral illness for these symptoms, usually occurring in this order:

- ***Relentless or continuous vomiting**
- ***Listlessness** (*loss of pep and energy with little interest in their environment*)
- ***Drowsiness** (*excessive sleepiness*)
- ***Personality change** (*such as irritability, slurred speech, sensitivity to touch*)
- ***Disorientation or confusion** (*unable to identify whereabouts, family members or answer questions*)
- ***Combativeness** (*striking out at those trying to help them*)
- ***Delirium, convulsions or loss of consciousness**

Reye's Syndrome should be suspected in anyone who vomits repeatedly. Phone your doctor immediately if these symptoms develop. Voice your concern about Reye's Syndrome. If your physician is unavailable, take the person to an Emergency Room promptly. Two liver function tests (SGOT, SGPT) can be done to determine the possibility of Reye's Syndrome. There is a 90% chance of recovery when the syndrome is treated in its earliest stages by physicians and nurses experienced in the treatment of Reye's.

Studies have shown that using aspirin or aspirin-containing medications to treat the symptoms of viral illnesses increases the chance of developing Reye's Syndrome. If you or a member of your family have a viral illness, **do not use aspirin or aspirin-containing medications**. In fact, you should consult your physician before you take any drugs, particularly aspirin or anti-nausea medicines, to treat flu, chicken pox or any viral illness. Anti nausea medicines may mask the symptoms of Reye's Syndrome.

The National Reye's Syndrome Foundation (NRSF), the U.S. Surgeon General, the Food and Drug Administration and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend that aspirin and combination products containing aspirin not be taken by anyone under 19 years of age during fever-causing illnesses.

Aspirin is part of the salicylate family of medicines. Another name for aspirin is acetylsalicylate; some drug labels may use the words acetylsalicylate, acetylsalicylic acid, salicylic acid, salicylate, etc., instead of the word aspirin. Currently, there is no conclusive data as to whether other forms of salicylates are associated with the development of Reye's Syndrome. Until further research has answered this question, the NRSF recommends that products containing any of these substances not be taken during episodes of viral infections.

The NRSF is a non-profit, tax-exempt organization with affiliates located in 45 states. The NRSF has pioneered the movement to disseminate knowledge about the disease in an effort to aid in early diagnosis and also provides funds for research into the cause, cure, care, treatment and prevention of Reye's Syndrome.

For additional information, please contact:

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