

[IMAGE]

## Don't Medicate Your Empathy Away

By Editorial Staff

Taking acetaminophen (common brand name: Tylenol, but also found in a variety of multi-ingredient medications including Excedrin) may make you feel less pain (although it won't address the cause of your pain), but it also may blunt your feelings in general, particularly *empathy*: the ability to feel or understand what another person is experiencing from their point of view, without the person having to tell you.

Empathy is an important quality because if you have it, it's hard to be selfish. After all, it means you're considering someone else's experience, feelings, emotions, etc., not just your own. Someone else actually matters, and that's always a good thing in our increasingly *me*-centered world.

In a recent study involving 114 college students, researchers showed positive scenarios (a man proposing to his girlfriend, a woman getting a raise at her job, a woman's father coming to her music recital, etc.) to students after administering either 1,000 mg of acetaminophen or an inactive pill (placebo).

Students who took acetaminophen experienced less pleasure and empathetic feelings toward the hypothetical characters in the scenarios compared with students who did not take acetaminophen, assessed by various tools that measured perceived positivity, perceived pleasure, personal pleasure and "other-directed" empathetic feelings: the extent to which the participants felt sympathy, warmth, compassion, etc., based on the scenario viewed.

medication - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark Published in *Frontiers in Psychology*, the study found that while acetaminophen use did not significantly reduce perceived positivity or perceived pleasure, it did reduce personal pleasure and empathetic feelings compared to placebo.

So, is reducing your pain important enough to reduce your ability to feel or understand anyone else's pain? We hope not, particularly when there are an abundance of nondrug methods available – such as chiropractic care – to combat back, neck, headache and various other types of pain. This also isn't the first time acetaminophen has been associated with a negative health outcome ([click here](#) for a recent example), which makes drug-free pain relief all the more important to your overall health and wellness. Talk to your doctor for additional information.

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