The Veterinary Poisons Information Service (VPIS) is a 24-hour telephone emergency service for veterinary professionals providing information on the management of actual and suspected poisoning in animals.

Prevention of paracetamol poisoning

- Never give your cat paracetamol.
- Always seek advice from your vet if you think your cat is in pain.
- Store medicines and products in their original containers, out of sight and out of reach of pets.
- Replace the tops of containers securely after use.
- If you have medicines in your handbag keep it out of reach of pets.

What to do if you think your pet has been poisoned

**EMERGENCY ADVICE**

- Remove your pet from the source of poison.
- Do not try to make your pet vomit – NEVER give salt water.
- Contact your veterinary surgeon for advice - do not delay seeking advice even if your pet is well. Your vet will ask for details of what has happened.
- Collect the poison and take a sample with you if you are advised to take your pet to the practice.
- Remember to protect yourself and others.

Contact details for your vet:

Paracetamol poisoning in cats
In cats the main effect of paracetamol is on the red blood cells where haemoglobin is changed to methaemoglobin. As a result the blood is less effective at carrying oxygen to the tissues of the body. If the cat survives this initial stage, liver injury may occur after several days.

The clinical signs of paracetamol poisoning, which will begin within the first few hours, can include:

- Panting
- Difficulty breathing
- Swollen face
- Discoloured gums
- Lethargy
- Distress
- Vomiting

How is paracetamol poisoning treated

- If your cat has been exposed to paracetamol – contact your vet immediately.
- If exposure was recent your vet may induce vomiting to remove some of the paracetamol from the stomach before it is absorbed.
- Activated charcoal which absorbs toxins may also be given.
- Your vet may prescribe the antidote, acetylcysteine, which may be given by mouth or through a vein. This will need to be continued for several days.
- Other specific treatments to protect the liver and reduce the methaemoglobin may be necessary.
- Your vet will also take blood samples to monitor for injury to your cat’s red blood cells and liver.
- In severe cases a blood transfusion may be required.

Outcome of paracetamol poisoning

The effects of paracetamol poisoning can be dramatic and distressing. Prognosis is good if treatment is prompt and before the onset of signs.

Prognosis is poor in cats with severe breathing difficulties.