Emergency Department

Paracetamol overdose (single ingestion)

What elements in the history are *essential*?
Amount ingested
Time of ingestion & symptoms since then
*Ensure this is not a repeated supratherapeutic ingestion (eg. 20 tablets every day for 3 days). these cases are treated differently and need to be discussed with senior
Co-ingestants or concurrent alcohol ingestion
Reason for ingestion

What dangerous differentials should I not miss?
Co-ingestion leading to other toxidromes (eg. TCA)

What should I look out for on examination?
Established hepatic failure takes days but very rarely they may exist

What tests should I do?
Paracetamol level at 4 hours - anything before that is a waste of time and blood
ECG
Blood sugar
Do not do any other investigations

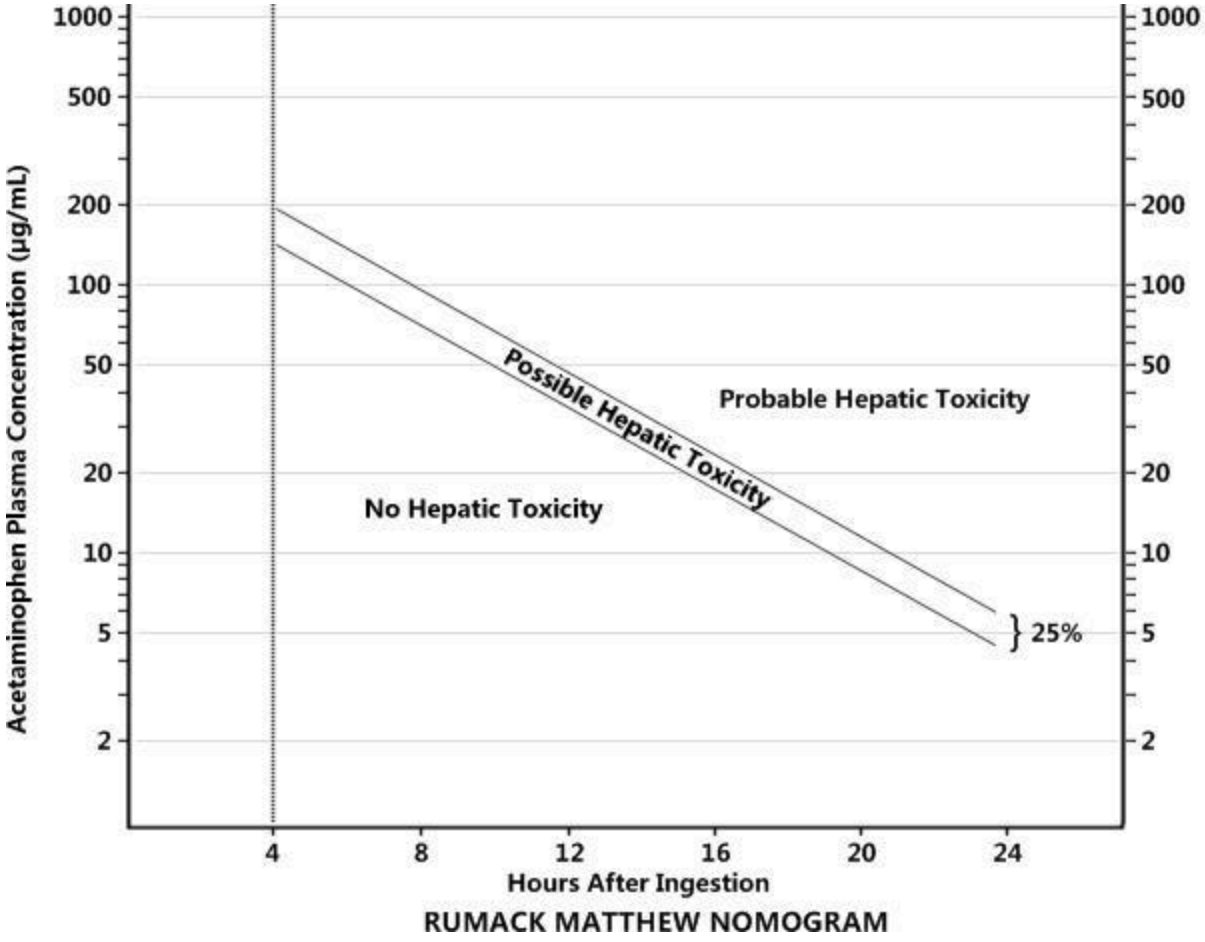
What treatment should I institute?
Oral charcoal may be offered within first hour of ingestion (not life saving)
Anti-emetic if necessary
N-Acetylcysteine required if Paracetamol level > 150 at 4 hrs:
- discuss with senior and admit to SSU
- see treatment on next page
If time of ingestion is **> 4 hrs** - consult senior for nomogram

Can the patient go home if all tests are normal?
Yes, if paracetamol level is < 150 at 4 hrs and accidental (not suicidal) ingestion
Usually SSU is the appropriate disposition as they require some psychiatric input

What outpatient management is appropriate?
If family wants psych evaluation somewhere else - referral letter required

Paracetamol Toxicity Management

References: Toxicology Handbook: Murray, Daly, Little, Cadogan. 2007
Created by: Rahul Goswami
Review date: Jan 2015



Adapted from Rumack BH, Matthew H. Acetaminophen poisoning and toxicity.

N-acetylcysteine (NAC) dosing

Loading dose:
150 mg/kg in 200 mL of 5% dextrose given over 60 minutes.

The maintenance dose follows at:
1. 50 mg/kg in 500 mL of 5% dextrose given IV over 4 hours
2. Followed by 100 mg/kg in 1000 mL of 5% dextrose given IV over 16 hours

If the patient needs further doses of NAC – continue the 100 mg/kg in 1000 mL of 5% dextrose given IV over 16 hours until instruction to discontinue.

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