



## Medication Alert

As part of our efforts to ensure your members are provided with support and information to promote, help regain, and/or maintain optimal health, the following information about medications and treatment options is being passed onto you.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) held a public advisory committee meeting on June 29 and June 30, 2009 to discuss acetaminophen (Tylenol) use in both over-the-counter (OTC) and prescription (Rx) products, the potential for liver injury, and potential interventions to reduce the incidence of liver injury. The advisory panel recommended that the popular prescription painkillers Vicodin and Percocet, which combine acetaminophen with an opiate narcotic, should be banned, and the maximum dose of over-the-counter painkillers with acetaminophen, like Tylenol or Excedrin, should be lowered. The panel's recommendations followed the release of an FDA report last month that found severe liver damage, and even death, can result from a lack of consumer awareness that acetaminophen -- which is easier on the stomach than such painkillers as aspirin and ibuprofen -- can cause such injury. The agency's report found that many people may consume more than the recommended dose of these pain relievers in the mistaken belief that taking more will prove more effective against pain without posing health risks. Consumers may also not know that acetaminophen is present in many over-the-counter products, including remedies for colds, headaches and fevers, making it possible to exceed the recommended acetaminophen dose, the report said. At this time, the FDA has not made any decisions regarding acetaminophen containing products, but is reviewing the recommendations of the advisory committee, all available safety and efficacy data as well as public input before making a final decision.

We want to emphasize that the FDA has not yet made a recommendation to follow the advisory board's recommendations but we want to keep our clients, health plans, and members completely current on the developments. HealthCare Strategies encourages your members who are taking any of these medications to contact their physician for guidance regarding appropriate and continued use of these drugs and possible alternative therapies.