J&J Defeats First Lawsuit Over Tylenol's Links to Liver Damage

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Johnson & Johnson (J&J) recently won its first lawsuit over the link between its Tylenol painkiller and liver damage caused by taking too much of the over-the-counter drug, Bloomberg reports.

A jury in New Jersey concluded that Regina Jackson, 55, who spent a week in the hospital after accidentally overdosing on the brand-name acetaminophen pill, failed to prove her case that the drug was improperly designed. In the suit, Jackson alleged that J&J's recommended Tylenol dose did not provide enough of a safety margin to protect its users.

Nonetheless, 220 additional cases are underway against J&J for Tylenol-related injuries. One federal trial, slated for court early next year in Philadelphia, has consolidated nearly 200 cases of patients who overdosed on Tylenol, as well as people who claim they got liver damage from taking the daily recommended dose of the popular drug.

J&J advises regular-strength Tylenol users to take two pills every four hours, up to a maximum dose of eight pills per day. However, in 2006, the American Liver Foundation warned that patients taking the daily recommended dose of the drug for two consecutive weeks could raise their liver enzymes, which can cause liver damage.

The Food and Drug Administration is evaluating a 2009 recommendation to reduce the maximum daily dose of acetaminophen because of these links. However, with 50 years of use and more than 150 studies to support its safety and efficacy, Tylenol officials aren't too worried.