



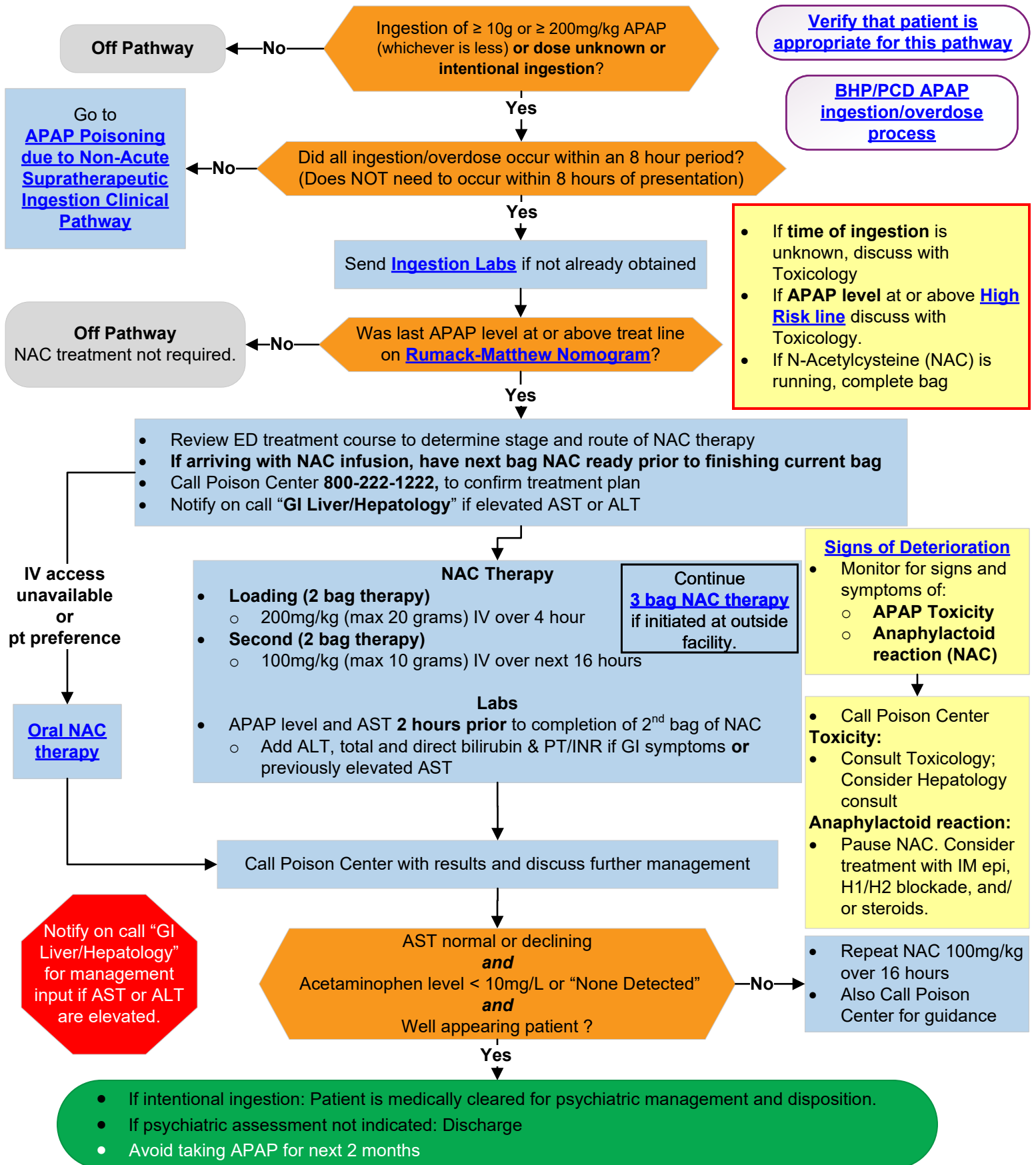
NATIONWIDE
CHILDREN'S

When your child needs a hospital, everything matters.

Acute Acetaminophen (APAP) Ingestion/Overdose

Inpatient

Center for
Clinical Excellence



Pre-Pathway Validation

Is this Acetaminophen poisoning?

Toxicity can occur after one ingested overdose (acute ingestion) or as a result of repeated, supratherapeutic doses (chronic ingestion)

Typical presentation:

Clinical manifestations of acetaminophen overdose can be **gradual and nonspecific**.

Four clinical stages of acetaminophen toxicity, based on time after ingestion:

- **Stage 1: 12 to 24 hours** - anorexia, malaise, diaphoresis, nausea, and vomiting.
- **Stage 2: 36 to 48 hours** - variable clinical presentation, may include elevation of liver enzyme levels, liver enlargement, or right upper quadrant abdominal pain. Patients also may be asymptomatic.
- **Stage 3: 3 to 5 days** - recurrence of anorexia, nausea, vomiting, and malaise. Liver enzyme levels may worsen and be accompanied by signs of liver failure, including jaundice, hypoglycemia, coagulopathy, and encephalopathy.
- **Stage 4:** Complete recovery **or** progression to liver failure.

Mechanism of toxicity:

- Acetaminophen is metabolized mainly in the liver by conjugation with sulfate and glucuronide.
- When an excessive amount of acetaminophen is present, it overwhelms the normal conjugation pathway, and metabolism is channeled to the cytochrome P-450 pathway, which produces the **toxic metabolite N-acetyl-p-benzoquinone imine (NAPQI)**.
- **NAPQI is detoxified by glutathione; however, when glutathione becomes depleted, NAPQI binds directly to hepatocytes, causing cellular necrosis.**

Argentieri J, Morrone K, Pollack Y. Acetaminophen and Ibuprofen overdosage. *Pediatr Rev.* 2012 Apr;33(4):188-9. doi: 10.1542/pir.33-4-188. PMID: 22474118.



Pathway Inclusion Criteria

- **Acute APAP Ingestion**
 - $\geq 10\text{g}$ or $\geq 200\text{ mg/kg}$ (whichever is less) over $< 8\text{hrs}$

Pathway Exclusion Criteria

- **Non-Acute supratherapeutic ingestion** (i.e. APAP ingested over ≥ 8 hours)
- Ingestion of extended release APAP

Diagnostic Timeout

Red Flags

- Nausea or vomiting or abdominal pain in patient with dehydration who has been taking recurrent doses of acetaminophen for fever
- LFT elevation and a history of acute or chronic acetaminophen use

Diagnostic Timeout

Differential Diagnosis

- Include acetaminophen toxicity in the Differential Diagnosis for:
- Unexplained AST/ALT elevation
- Right upper quadrant abdominal pain
- Nausea and vomiting
- Encephalopathy

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Admission Criteria

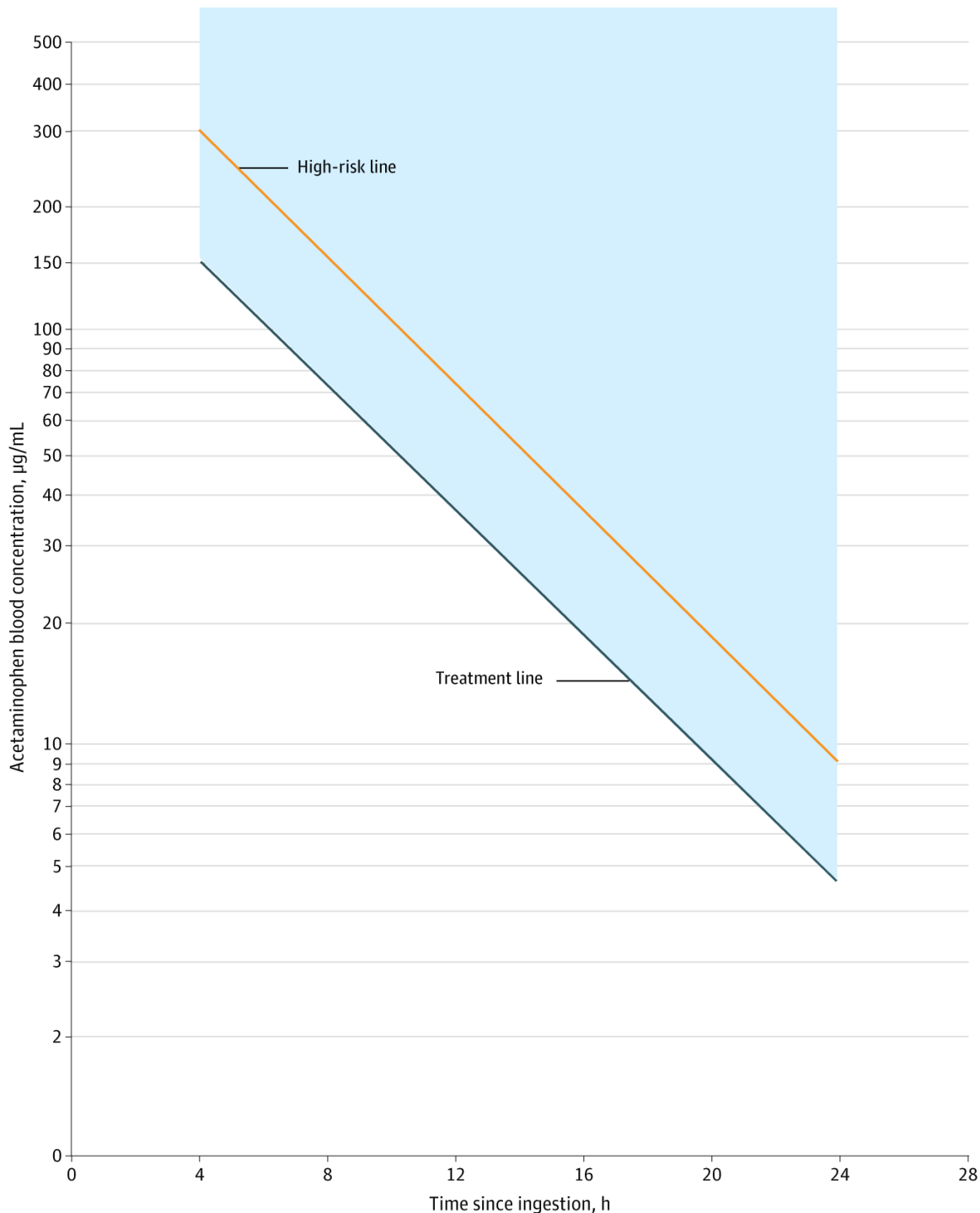
- **Acute Ingestion:** APAP level at or above treatment line on nomogram
- **Non-Acute supratherapeutic Ingestion:** APAP level > 10 mcg/mL **or** elevation in AST indicating treatment with NAC
- Intentional overdose not ruled out
- Unable to medically clear beyond presenting symptoms

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Severity Assessment

Revised Rumack-Matthew Nomogram for the Acute Ingestion of Acetaminophen

- Acetylcysteine should be initiated if a serum or plasma acetaminophen blood concentration drawn 4 to 24 hours after ingestion falls on or above the treatment line (blue area in nomogram).
- If the concentration falls on or above the **high-risk line**, discuss with Toxicology and/or COPC if High Dose acetylcysteine should be given.



Reference: Dart RC, Mullins ME, Matoushek T, et al. Management of Acetaminophen Poisoning in the US and Canada: A Consensus Statement. *JAMA Netw Open*. 2023;6(8):e2327739. doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2023.27739

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Signs of Deterioration

Acetaminophen toxicity: Four clinical stages of, based on time after ingestion:

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- **Stage 3: 3 to 5 days** - recurrence of anorexia, nausea, vomiting, and malaise. Liver enzyme levels may worsen and be accompanied by signs of liver failure, including jaundice, hypoglycemia, coagulopathy, and encephalopathy.
- **Stage 4:** Complete recovery **or** progression to liver failure.

Signs of NAC Anaphylactoid Reaction:

- Urticaria, pruritus, facial flushing, wheezing, dyspnea, and hypotension.

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Ingestion Labs

All patients with APAP ingestion:

- AST/ALT
- APAP (obtained at least 4 hours from start of ingestion time)

Intentional ingestion/self harm:

- Salicylate level
- Ethanol level
- EKG
- Beta HCG (if applicable)
- Chem 7
- Urine drug abuse screen if concerned for street drugs
- Send out urine drug screen if concern for other medication overdose

If ill appearing /encephalopathic (moderate/severe hepatotoxicity) also include:

- iSTAT
- Comprehensive Metabolic Panel (CMP)
- Lactate
- Ammonia
- PT/INR

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3 Bag NAC Therapy

Loading

- 150 mg/kg (max 15 grams) IV over 1 hour

Second

- 50 mg/kg (max 5 grams) IV over next 4 hours

Third

- 100 mg/kg (max 10 grams) IV over next 16 hours
- **Draw APAP level and AST 2 hours prior to completion of last bag of NAC**
- Add ALT, total and direct bilirubin & PT/INR if GI symptoms **or** previously elevated AST

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Oral NAC Therapy

Loading

- 140mg/kg (max 15 grams) PO

Maintenance

- 70mg/kg (max 7.5 grams) PO every 4 hours x 24 hours
- Obtain repeat labs 24 hours AFTER starting NAC:
 - APAP level and AST/ALT
 - Add total and direct bilirubin, lactate, ammonia, INR & alkaline phosphatase (AP) if GI symptoms or previously-elevated AST
- Continue maintenance NAC if APAP > 10 mg/L or elevated AST

To Optimize Tolerance of PO NAC

- Dilute to 5% solution in orange juice or soft drink
- Chilled/over ice
- Sip through straw poked in hole of saran wrap covering cup to reduce odor
- If normal QT on EKG, use ondansetron
- No need to repeat dose if emesis > 1 hour later & does not smell like NAC

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Patient at Behavioral Health Pavilion/ Psychiatric Crisis Department BHP/PCD

In the instances where transport or IV access is delayed, **initiation of oral NAC should be considered at the Behavioral Health Pavilion.** Studies have shown that oral NAC is as effective as IV NAC in reducing hepatotoxicity in acetaminophen toxicity, though some patients may not tolerate the oral product due to nausea/vomiting.

Acetylcysteine 20% oral solution is now stocked in the BH1A Pyxis Station located in the PCD medication room. *This product comes as an oral solution in glass vials and should be diluted prior to administration.*

Prior to ordering NAC, physicians should assess if oral NAC would be appropriate to start in patients with **acetaminophen ingestion**. As always, contact Poison Center (800-222-1222) with any questions/concerns.

- When to ***emergently*** transfer patients to MCED (via ambulance) for IV treatment:
 - Altered mental status
 - “Massive” ingestion
 - Definition of “massive” may vary; generally if
 - ❑ 4-hr acetaminophen serum concentration > 300 mcg/mL **or**
 - ❑ Ingestion of greater than 32g of acetaminophen
 - Delay in safe car transportation to main campus and patient unable to tolerate oral product
 - Any other medical instability or if recommended by Poison Control Center

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Therapy**](#)

Discharge Criteria & Planning

- Down trending or normal AST
- Acetaminophen level < 10 mg/L or “None Detected”
- Well appearing
- Cleared by psychiatry for discharge (if applicable)

Notify on call “GI Liver/Hepatology” for management input if **ANY** AST or ALT elevation.

If AST elevation,
Two levels showing significant decline
and
AST < 1000 U/L
are required before discontinuing NAC

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Quality Measures

Process Measure:

- Order set use
- Time from AST level *or* APAP level to start of NAC treatment

Outcome Measure:

- AST normal ***or*** < 1000 U/L with 2 declining levels, prior to discharge

Balancing Measure:

- LOS

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References

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Team & Process

Content Development Team

Leader:

Hospital Pediatrics:

Gerd McGwire MD, PhD

Members:

Toxicology:

Marcel J. Casavant, MD
Hannah Hays, MD

Hospital Pediatrics:

Meghan Fennell, MD

Hepatology:

Carol Potter, MD

ED:

Aarti Gaglani, MD

Pharmacy:

Jenny Steinbrenner, PharmD,
BCPPS
Kimberly Jones, PharmD,
BCPS, BCPPS

Residents:

Gina Livecchi, MD
Madison Dudon, MD

Clinical Pathways Program:

Medical Director – Hospital Pediatrics:

Gerd McGwire, MD, PhD

Medical Director – Clinical Informatics & Emergency
Medicine:

Laura Rust, MD, MPH

Business & Development Manager:

Rekha Voruganti, MBOE, LSSBB

Program Coordinator:

Tara Dinh, BS

Clinical Pathway Approved

Medical Director – Associate Chief Medical Officer,
Center for Clinical Excellence:

Ryan Bode, MD, MBOE

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Clinical Pathway Development

This clinical pathway was developed using the process described in the NCH Clinical Pathway Development Manual Version 6, 2022. Clinical Pathways at Nationwide Children's Hospital (NCH) are standards which provide general guidance to clinicians. Patient choice, clinician judgment, and other relevant factors in diagnosing and treating patients remain central to the selection of diagnostic tests and therapy. The ordering provider assumes all risks associated with care decisions. NCH assumes no responsibility for any adverse consequences, errors, or omissions that may arise from the use or reliance on these guidelines. NCH's clinical pathways are reviewed periodically for consistency with new evidence; however, new developments may not be represented, and NCH makes no guarantees, representations, or warranties with respect to the information provided in this clinical pathway.

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**For more information about our pathways and program please contact:
ClinicalPathwaysProgram@NationwideChildrens.org**

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