Over-the-Counter (OTC) Medications

Helpful Tips

• Choose products that target your specific symptoms, rather than combination products that treat many symptoms that you may not have. See below.

• Be cautious of doubling up on the same ingredients (for example, Tylenol is in many products).

• Take extra care when using “PM” products, as they may have serious side effects.

• Always read the product labels for important dosing and precaution information.
  - Doses may differ for adults and children
  - Many products have age limitations
  - Most products have a maximum number of days that they should be used

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Over-the-Counter Options

Combination Products: Treat multiple symptoms

• Combination products often result in overtreating because you’re taking medications for symptoms that you do not have.

• Instead, choose an over-the-counter product that targets your specific symptoms with ingredients only for those symptoms.

OTC Products for Pain & Fever:

• Acetaminophen (Tylenol), ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), naproxen (Aleve), and aspirin can be used for fever and pain.

• They are often found in many combination products.

• Avoid using multiple products with the same ingredient.

• Follow dosing recommendations on the label.

PM Products:

• Nighttime products contain sedating antihistamines, such as diphenhydramine (Benadryl) or doxylamine (Unisom) and are generally labeled with “PM”.

• Be cautious when using PM products, as they may cause serious side effects, especially when used long-term or if you are older than 65.

• Side effects may include dizziness, confusion and increase risk of falling.

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Examples of OTC Products and their active ingredients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cough (product name, active ingredient)</th>
<th>Runny Nose / Allergies (product name, active ingredient)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Robitussin Chest Congestion, Guaifenesin</td>
<td>Claritin, Loratadine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mucinex</td>
<td>Benadryl, Diphenhydramine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delsym, Dextromethorphan</td>
<td>Allegra, Fexofenadine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robitussin Cough</td>
<td>Zyrtec, Ceterizine</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Congestion / Stuffy Nose (product name, active ingredient)</th>
<th>Headache / Pain / Fever (product name, active ingredient)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sudafed, Pseudoephedrine*</td>
<td>Tylenol, Acetaminophen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Included in products that include a “D” in their name</td>
<td>Advil and Motrin, Ibuprofen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudafed PE, Phenylephrine</td>
<td>Aleve, Naproxen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bayer, Aspirin</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Choose an OTC product based on your symptoms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generic Name (Brand Name)</th>
<th>Important Tips</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Congestion (plugged ears, nose or head congestion)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Oral Decongestants (pill form):**  
  Phenylephrine (Sudafed PE)  
  Pseudoephedrine (Sudafed) |
| - Decongestants may disrupt your sleep  
  - If you have high blood pressure, speak with your doctor before taking these medications.  
    - Coricidin HBP products are specially formulated to be safe for those with high blood pressure.  
  - If you have a thyroid disorder, diabetes, heart disease, glaucoma, or an enlarged prostate make sure you speak with your doctor before taking any of these medications.  
  - Excessive use of nasal decongestants may cause rebound congestion. |
| **Nasal Decongestants (nasal spray form):**  
  *These are the treatment of choice for nasal congestion*  
  Oxymetazoline (Afrin Sinus)  
  Fluticasone propionate (Flonase)  
  Mometasone (Nasonex)  
  Triamcinolone acetonide (Nasocort) |
| **Cough** |
| **Dry, hacking cough:**  
  Dextromethorphan (Delsym) |
| - Avoid cough medications in children younger than 4 years old.  
  - Hydration helps to naturally loosen and thin mucus to help with cough. |
| **Wet, mucousy cough:**  
  Guaifenesin (Mucinex) |
| **Runny Nose or Sneezing** |
| **Antihistamines:**  
  **Sedating**  
  Diphenhydramine (Benadryl, Sominex)  
  Chlorpheniramine (Chlor-Trimeton)  
  Doxylamine (Unisom)  
  **Non-Sedating**  
  Loratadine (Claritin, Alavert)  
  Cetirizine (Zyrtec)  
  Fexofenadine (Allegra) |
| - Many of these medications will make you tired and can impair performance.  
  - Do not use in newborns/infants, if you are lactating, or if you have narrow-angle glaucoma.  
  - Although cetirizine is considered non-sedating, it may be sedating in some patients. |
| **General Aches and Pains or a Fever** |
| **Pain and Fever Medications:**  
  Acetaminophen (Tylenol)  
  Ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin)  
  Naproxen (Aleve)  
  Aspirin (Bayer) |
| - Pay attention to dosing limitations which are different for children and adults.  
  - NSAIDS (Ibuprofen and Naproxen) can have dangerous side effects - make sure you talk to your doctor before using these on a regular or long-term basis for pain.  
  - Due to the risk of Reye's Syndrome, aspirin should not be used in children **under 19 years old**.  
  - Aspirin can increase the risk of bleeding, especially if used with other blood thinners. Speak with your doctor before using this, especially if using it long-term. |
| **Asthma** |
| **Primatene Mist** |
| - Always speak with your healthcare provider before using.  
  - Does not treat asthma, only temporarily lessens symptoms.  
  - Should not replace your regular asthma inhalers.  
  - Not for cough, allergies, or cold symptoms. |