

Checklist for Choosing Over-the-Counter (OTC) Medicine for Adults

Information I need before going to the store:

- ☐ Problems(s) or symptoms(s) to be treated: _____
- ☐ Allergies or other health problems: _____
- ☐ Any medicine used for this problem before or medicine recommended by the doctor:

- ☐ Other medicines (OTC and prescription), vitamins, and other dietary supplements being used:

- ☐ Doctor: _____ Pharmacy: _____

At the store:

- ☐ Find the group of medicines that treats the problem(s) or symptom(s) (such as pain, cough, or allergy).
- ☐ Find the form of medicine (such as tablet, capsule, or liquid) wanted.
- ☐ Read the “**Drug Facts**” label carefully on each medicine package.

Drug Facts

Active ingredients/Purposes

- ☐ Make sure the **Active Ingredients** aren't the same as those in another medicine already being used.
- ☐ If the medicine contains more than one **Active Ingredient**, read the **Purposes** of each active ingredient to make sure all of the active ingredients are needed for the problem(s) or symptom(s) to be treated.

Uses

- ☐ Find medicine that treats only the problem(s) or symptom(s) to be treated.

Warnings

- ☐ Is there any reason this medicine shouldn't be used?
- ☐ Is there any reason to talk to a doctor or pharmacist before using this medicine?

Directions

- ☐ Find the correct dose on the package.
- ☐ Make sure liquid medicine comes with a measuring tool (such as dosing or measuring cup). If not, ask for one at the pharmacy. Spoons made for eating and cooking may give the wrong dose and shouldn't be used.

- ☐ Check with the doctor or pharmacist to be sure the new medicine can be used with other medicines being used.

The *Drug Facts* label

In the United States, each OTC medicine has a *Drug Facts* label. The *Drug Facts* label is there to help you choose the right OTC medicine and use it safely. All medicines, even OTC medicines, can cause side effects (unwanted or unexpected effects). But if the directions on the label are followed, the chance of side effects can be lowered.

Sections of the label

The *Active ingredients/Purposes* section tells you the part of the medicine that makes it work (active ingredient), what it does (purpose), and how much of each active ingredient is in each unit (such as pill, capsule, or teaspoon). Choose a medicine that treats only the problem(s) you want to treat. Extra medicine won't help, and could cause harmful or unwanted side effects.

The *Uses* section tells you the problems the medicine will treat. The problem(s) you want to treat should match at least one of the *Uses*.

The *Warnings* section tells you:

- When to talk to a doctor first.
- How the medicine might make a person feel.
- When the medicine shouldn't be used.
- Things that shouldn't be done while using the medicine.
- When to stop using the medicine.
- To check with a doctor before using medicine if the person is pregnant or breastfeeding.
- To keep medicines away from children.

The *Directions* section tells you how use the medicine safely:

- How much to use.
- How to use it.
- How often to use it (how many times per day, how many hours apart).
- How long it can be used.

The *Other Information* section tells you how to keep the medicine when it isn't being used.

The *Inactive ingredients* section tells you the parts of the medicine that aren't the active ingredient(s). These parts are added to the active ingredient(s) to help shape the form, to flavor or color the medicine, or to help the medicine last longer (preservatives). Check this section to see if there is anything that might cause an allergic reaction.

- ❖ Using more medicine than directed may raise the chance of unwanted side effects. If you think more is needed, or the medicine is needed for a longer time, talk to the doctor.
- ❖ Using less medicine than directed may not help and could cause unwanted side effects.
- ❖ Child safety caps on medicines can help keep children safer in your home. Most OTC medicines come with child safety caps. For your family's prescription medicines, you can ask your pharmacist for child safety caps.



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