

UAB Health Education

STUDENT HEALTH SERVICES

OVER-THE-COUNTER DRUGS



Over-the-counter drugs are often used to treat symptoms of colds, flus and other illnesses. Before taking an over-the-counter drug, always read the package insert, take the product as directed, take the lowest effective dose and contact a pharmacist or healthcare provider with any questions. Many over-the-counter drugs contain combinations of the same ingredients. Always be careful not to take medications containing too much of certain drugs.

GENERIC NAME	BRAND NAMES	DOSING	PRECAUTIONS	SIDE EFFECTS
PAIN RELIEVERS: Reduce general achiness, headaches and fever				
ACETAMINOPHEN Painkiller, fever-reducer	Tylenol	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 325-1000mg every 4-6 hours as needed Max dose: 4,000mg over 24 hours Immediate release 325mg Extended release 500mg 	Many cold-medicines may contain acetaminophen. Never take more than one medication containing acetaminophen at once. Overdose causes liver damage.	Nausea, vomiting, constipation
IBUPROFEN Painkiller, fever-reducer, anti-inflammatory	Advil, Motrin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 200-600mg every 6 hours or 800mg every 8 hours as needed Max dose: 2400mg/day 	May irritate stomach so take with food. Patients with history of peptic ulcer disease or gastrointestinal bleeds can be at risk for GI bleed.	Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, headache
NAPROXEN SODIUM Painkiller, fever-reducer, anti-inflammatory. Pain relief lasts 8-12 hours (twice as long as other pain-killers).	Aleve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 220mg every 8-12 hours as needed Max dose: 440mg in an 8-12 hour period or 1250mg in a 24-hour period 	May irritate stomach so take with food. Patients with history of peptic ulcer disease or gastrointestinal bleeds can be at risk for GI bleed.	Heartburn, nausea
ASPIRIN Painkiller, fever-reducer, anti-inflammatory.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 300-650mg every 4-6 hours as needed Max dose: 4000mg in 24 hours 	Not recommended in children due to risk for life-threatening Reye syndrome. May irritate stomach so take with food. Patients with history of peptic ulcer disease or gastrointestinal bleeds can be at risk for GI bleed.	Heartburn
TO RELIEVE COUGH				
GUAIFENESIN Helps loosen congestion in your chest and throat, making it easier to cough	Mucinex, Robitussin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 200-400mg every 4 hours or 1200mg every 12 hours as needed. Max Dose 2400mg/day Immediate Release 200-400mg Extended release 600-1200mg 		Dizziness, headache, drowsiness, nausea
DEXTROMETHORPHAN Cough suppressant useful for dry cough	DayQuil Cough, Delsym, Robitussin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10-20mg every 4 hours or 30mg every 6-8 hours Max Dose: 120mg in 24 hours 	Dextromethorphan is in many combination cold medicines. Do not take multiple medications containing dextromethorphan. Not helpful for a cough producing sputum. Will not treat a cough caused by smoking, asthma, or emphysema.	Stomach upset



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DECONGESTANTS				
PHENYLEPHRINE Oral medication used to treat nasal/sinus congestion		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10mg every 4 hours Max dose: 60 mg in 24 hours 	Ask a provider before using if you have high blood pressure. If used for several days in a row, may result in increased congestion once the decongestant wears off.	Flushing, loss of appetite, feeling excited or restless
PSEUDOEPHEDRINE Oral medication used to treat nasal/sinus congestion or congestion of tubes that drain fluid from your inner ears (Eustachian tubes)	Sudafed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 30-60mg every 4 to 6 hours Max dose 240 mg in 24 hours 	Do not give to a child below four years old. Ask a provider before using if you have high blood pressure. If used for several days in a row, may result in increased congestion once the decongestant wears off.	Insomnia, flushing, loss of appetite, feeling excited or restless
OXYMETOZALINE NASAL Nasal spray used to treat nasal/sinus congestion	Afrin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2-3 sprays each nostril every 10-12 hours Max dose: do not exceed 2 doses in 24 hours Do not use for more than 3 days continuously. 	Ask a provider before using if you have high blood pressure. If used for several days in a row, may result in increased congestion once the decongestant wears off.	Mild burning of nose, sneezing, runny nose
FLUTICASONE NASAL Nasal spray used to treat nasal congestion, sneezing, runny nose, and itching/watery eyes from seasonal allergies	Flonase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1-2 sprays each nostril once or twice a day 		Minor nosebleed, mild burning of nose, cough, sinus pain
SALINE NASAL SPRAY Nasal spray used to treat dry or irritated nasal passages and to thin fluid in nasal passages.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1-2 sprays each nostril every few hours as needed 		Nasal irritation
NON-SEDATING ANTIHISTAMINES: Used to treat cold or allergy symptoms such as sneezing, itching, watery eyes, and runny nose. Also treats itching and swelling from hives caused by an allergic reaction. Can be used as needed, but may also help with daily use for prolonged periods during allergy seasons.				
CERITIZINE	Zyrtec	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10mg once daily 	Do not use with alcohol or combine with other anti-histamines.	Dizziness, headache, dry mouth, nausea, constipation
LEVOCERITIZINE	Xyzal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5mg once daily in the evening 	Ask your provider before taking if you have liver or kidney disease or gallbladder problems.	Sinus pain, cough, dry mouth, nausea, constipation
FEXOFENADINE	Allegra	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 60mg twice daily or 180mg once daily 	Ask your provider before taking if you have kidney disease. Avoid drinking fruit juices or taking antacids within 15 minutes of taking fexofenadine, because they can decrease your body's ability to absorb the medication.	Headache, nausea, upset stomach



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LORATADINE	Claritin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10mg once daily 	Ask a provider before taking if you have liver or kidney disease.	Headache, dry mouth, nausea, upset stomach
<p>SEDATING ANTIHISTAMINES: Used to treat cold or allergy symptoms such as sneezing, itching, watery eyes, and runny nose. Can be used to treat itching and swelling from hives caused by an allergic reaction. Also used for motion sickness and to induce sleep.</p>				
DIPHENHYDRAMINE	Benadryl	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25-50mg every 4-6 hours • Max dose: 300mg in 24 hours 	Causes drowsiness. Use caution when driving, operating machinery, or other hazardous activities. Drinking alcohol with this medication can worsen side effects.	Drowsiness, dizziness, dry mouth, constipation, blurred vision.
<p>DIMENHYDRINATE Used to prevent nausea, vomiting, and dizziness associated with motion sickness</p>	Dramamine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50-100mg every 4-6 hours • Max dose: 400mg in 24 hours 	Ask your provider before taking if you have liver or kidney disease or a breathing disorder. Take 30-60 minutes before travelling. Dimenhydrinate may cause blurred vision and can impair your reactions. Drinking alcohol with this medication can worsen side effects.	Drowsiness, dry mouth, constipation, blurred vision, feeling restless or excited.