

WHY THE LABEL MATTERS

The *Drug Facts* label appears on all over-the-counter (OTC) medicines from mouthwash to pain medicines to sunscreen to eyedrops. *Drug Facts* is a standardized label on OTC medicines required by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). It helps you understand the purpose of the OTC medicines that your family members take, who should take these medicines, and how these medicines should be taken safely. The *Drug Facts* label provides usage and safety information in a standardized format so that it is easy to read and understand. Below is a summary of each *Drug Facts* section and what it tells you.

- ▶ **1.** The *Active Ingredients* section of the label tells you the names of the active ingredients in the medicine and what they do (e.g., relieve pain, reduce fever, or suppress coughing). Some medicines may have more than one active ingredient.
- ▶ **2.** The *Uses* section of the label tells you the symptoms the medicine treats.
- ▶ **3.** Look in the *Warnings* section to learn about what other medicines you should not take with this medicine, side effects the medicine can cause, when you should ask a doctor before taking the medicine, and other important safety information like when to stop taking the medicine and talk to a doctor.
- ▶ **4.** The *Directions* section of the label tells you the amount of medicine (dose)

Drug Facts*									
1 Active Ingredients	Purpose Medicine 100 mg cough suppressant Medicine 150 mg nasal decongestant								
2 Uses	Temporarily relieves: ■ coughing due to minor throat and bronchial irritation ■ nasal congestion								
3 Warnings	Do not use if you have ever had an allergic reaction to this product or any of its ingredients. Ask a doctor before use if you have liver or kidney disease. Your doctor should determine if you need a different dose.								
When using this product ■ you may get drowsy ■ be careful when driving a motor vehicle or operating machinery ■ excitability may occur, especially in children									
Stop use and seek medical help right away if an allergic reaction occurs.									
Keep out of reach of children. In case of overdose, get medical help or contact your local poison center at 1-800-222-1222.									
4 Directions	■ Tablet melts in mouth. Can be taken with or without water.								
	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Age</th> <th>Dose</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>adults and children 12 years and older</td> <td>2 tablets every 12 hours; do not use more than 4 tablets in a 24-hour period</td> </tr> <tr> <td>children 6 years to 11</td> <td>1 tablet every 12 hours; do not use more than 2 tablets in a 24-hour period</td> </tr> <tr> <td>children under 6 years of age</td> <td>ask a doctor</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Age	Dose	adults and children 12 years and older	2 tablets every 12 hours; do not use more than 4 tablets in a 24-hour period	children 6 years to 11	1 tablet every 12 hours; do not use more than 2 tablets in a 24-hour period	children under 6 years of age	ask a doctor
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children under 6 years of age	ask a doctor								
5 Other Information	■ store at 20°–25° C (68°–77° F) ■ keep dry ■ see end panel for lot number and expiration date								
6 Inactive Ingredients	anhydrous citric acid, aspartame, magnesium stearate, maltodextrin, modified food starch, sodium bicarbonate, D&C yellow no. 10								
7 Questions or Comments?	Call weekdays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. ET at 1-800-XXX-XXXX.								

you should take, how often you should take the medicine, and how much you can take in one day.

- ▶ **5.** In the *Other Information* section of the label you'll find other things you need to know, such as how to store the medicine.
- ▶ **6.** You'll find a list of preservatives, food coloring, flavoring, or other ingredients not intended to treat your symptoms in the *Inactive Ingredients* section on the *Drug Facts* label. These can be important if you or someone in your family has an allergy.
- ▶ **7.** Some medicines also have a *Questions or Comments?* section of the label that gives you the phone number of the company if you have questions or comments on the specific medicine.

Download a mini-poster of the *Drug Facts* label at scholastic.com/OTCliteracy



KNOW WHO TO ASK

Program the Poison Help Number Into Your Phone: **1-800-222-1222**

KNOW THE DOSE

Measurement is an exact science. The term “dose” refers to the amount of medicine that you should take or administer to a member of your family—as indicated by the “Directions” section of the *Drug Facts* label (see Family Resource Sheet #1) or as directed by your doctor. Understanding safe dosing is an important part of becoming knowledgeable about the safe use of over-the-counter (OTC) medicine.

MEASURE CAREFULLY

Accuracy is important when it comes to taking medicine, or when you’re giving medicine to family members. When the recommended *dose* is not followed, medicines may not work the way they are meant to, or may result in an overdose.

► **Tip #1: Take time to read the label and understand what’s in the medicine:** Follow the directions on your child’s medicine closely and make sure that you know the active ingredients. Giving your child two or more medicines with the same active ingredient may lead to an overdose or cause harm.

► **Tip #2: Many children’s medicines provide dosing instructions based on weight and age:** If you know the child’s weight, it is better to dose using the weight-based instructions on OTC medicines. Some OTC medicines do not provide dosing for certain children’s ages and weights. In this case, it is important to call a health-care professional.

► **Tip #3: Always use the dosing device that comes with the medicine:** Even if the units of measure on the dosing devices that come with different medicines are the same—they are not interchangeable. Dosing devices are customized to the medicine. Using other dosing devices or household measurement tools (such as teaspoons, tablespoons, or kitchen spoons) may cause you to misdose medicine.

70,000

In 2012, poison centers reported over 70,000 cases involving medication-dosing errors in children 12 and younger.

SOURCE: American Association of Poison Control Centers

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► **Tip #4: More is not better and could cause harm:** When your child is sick, you want him or her to feel better fast. But giving your child more than the recommended dose of medicine does not mean he or she is going to get better faster, and it could have adverse effects. So be sure to read and follow the label each time.

► **Tip #5: Never give adult medicines to children:** Children are not smaller adults. Some over-the-counter medicines are not intended for use by children and could cause harm.

► **Tip #6: Communication among caregivers is crucial:** In 2012, poison centers reported over 70,000 cases involving medication-dosing errors in children 12 and younger and accidental “double dosing” was the leading cause of errors in this age group. To avoid double dosing or dosing errors when you’re depending on another person to administer medicine to your child, use clear communication. Caregivers need instructions on exactly what medicine to give to your child, when your child should get the medicine, and the correct dose.



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SOURCES: otcsafety.org/uploads/files/publications/Kids_Arent_Just_Small_Adults.pdf; consumermedsafety.org/tools-and-resources/medication-safety-tools-and-resources/taking-your-medicine-safely/measure-liquid-medications.

UP AND AWAY AND OUT OF SIGHT

When it comes to proper storage and disposal of over-the-counter (OTC) medicines, there are a few things to keep in mind with regard to your family's safety and health. Most important, medicines need to be kept out of reach and sight of naturally curious children.

STORAGE SMARTS

Every year more than 500,000 parents and caregivers call poison control centers because a child got into medicine or was given the wrong dose of medicine. That's one call every minute of every day.

► **Tip #1:** To prevent medicine poisoning, store medicines up and away and out of sight: When you're storing over-the-counter and prescription medicine, and vitamins and supplements, select a spot that's high and out of the reach of children. Don't forget, safe storage applies to both adult and children's medicines. (Fact: In 86% of emergency room visits for medicine poisoning, the child got into medicine belonging to an adult.)*

► **Tip #2:** Be aware of how and where children get into medicine: Kids get into medicine in many places, such as in purses and bags, or on counters or nightstands. (Fact: In 67% of medicine poisoning cases, the medicine was within reach of a child, such as in a purse, left on a counter or dresser, or found on the ground.)*

► **Tip #3:** Products like diaper rash remedies, skin creams, or eyedrops that you might not think of as medicine need to be stored safely too: Most parents understand the importance of storing medicines up and away, but may not safely store products that they might not think of as medicines.

60,000

More than 60,000 young children end up in emergency rooms every year because they get into medicines while their parent or caregiver is not looking.

SOURCE: upandaway.org

Download a mini-poster of the *Drug Facts* label at scholastic.com/OTCliteracy

► **Tip #4:** When you have visitors, consider the medicines they might be bringing into the home: When you have guests, offer to secure the belongings they bring that may contain medicines (like purses, bags, and coats). (Fact: In 43% of cases, the medicine a child got into belonged to a relative, such as an aunt, uncle, or grandparent.)*

► **Tip #5:** As soon as you've finished administering medicine, replace the cap tightly: Buy medicines with child-resistant packaging if possible, but remember, child-resistant does not mean childproof. With enough persistence, curious children may be able to get into medicine, so always return medicine to an up-and-away location after every use.

► **Tip #6:** Clean out your medicine cabinet: It's important to safely dispose of all expired or unused medicines. Inquire about the location of drug drop boxes or take-back programs in your community. To dispose of it yourself, put the medicine into a sealable plastic bag. If the medicine is a solid, add water to dissolve it. Then add kitty litter, sawdust, or coffee grounds to the plastic bag to make it less appealing for children or pets. Visit the Food and Drug Administration's [guidelines for medicine disposal](#) and read the Drug Enforcement Administration's information on the [National Take-Back Initiative](#).



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FAMILY RESOURCE SHEET #4 • OTC MEDICINE MISUSE

MISUSE IS DANGEROUS

Misuse—taking an over-the-counter (OTC) medicine in a manner other than what is directed by the *Drug Facts* label or a doctor—is dangerous.

YOUNG PEOPLE AND MISUSE

OTC medicines are available for purchase without a doctor’s prescription. While these medicines are easy to buy, they can be harmful if misused.

In fifth and sixth grades, children are becoming more responsible for their self-care. It is important to monitor your children and reinforce that they should not be taking OTC medicines without adult supervision. In situations where children are required to take medicines regularly, it is important that parents continue to monitor use. Even children who take medicines daily may make errors in dose or dosing frequency.

Create an environment that encourages learning and discussion about how to take medicine responsibly and positions health-care professionals as their go-to resource for questions and concerns.

OTC medicines can be harmful if misused or not used responsibly. This can include:

- ▶ Not reading and following the *Drug Facts* label
- ▶ Taking more than the labeled dose, or redosing medicine more frequently than directed on the label
- ▶ Using more than one medicine with the same active ingredient at the same time, which can lead to an overdose

10,000

Medicine errors and misuse of commonly available over-the-counter medications result in approximately 10,000 emergency room visits for kids under 18 each year.

SOURCE: *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 2009

[scholastic.com/
OTCliteracy/parents](http://scholastic.com/OTCliteracy/parents)

- ▶ Taking medicines for longer than directed on the label, without consulting a health-care professional first
- ▶ Taking medicines for reasons or symptoms other than what is directed on the label

Never misuse OTC medicine. When it comes to taking medicine, more doesn’t necessarily mean better. If your symptoms don’t get better, contact a doctor. Take the time to fully understand the medicine that you’re taking, read the *Drug Facts* label, and call your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist with questions.

For more information about preventing medicine misuse, visit
consumermedsafety.org/OTC-Abuse



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SOURCES: www.fda.gov/Drugs/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/BuyingUsingMedicineSafely/UnderstandingOver-the-CounterMedicines/Choosingtherightover-the-countermedicineOTCs/ucm150299.htm; drugabuse.gov/about-nida/legislative-activities/testimony-to-congress/2010/09/prescription-drug-abuse; japha.org/; prescriptiondrugmisuse.org/index.php?page=defining_Rx_drug_misuse.