



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

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.



Examples of OTC Products and their active ingredients

Cough (product name, active ingredient)

Robitussin Chest Congestion, Guaifenesin
Mucinex
Delsym, Dextromethorphan
Robitussin Cough

Runny Nose / Allergies (product name, active ingredient)

Claritin, Loratadine
Benadryl, Diphenhydramine
Allegra, Fexofenadine
Zyrtec, Ceterizine

Congestion / Stuffy Nose (product name, active ingredient)

Sudafed, Pseudoephedrine*
*Included in products that include a “D” in their name
Sudafed PE, Phenylephrine

Headache / Pain / Fever (product name, active ingredient)

Tylenol, Acetaminophen
Advil and Motrin, Ibuprofen
Aleve, Naproxen
Bayer, Aspirin

Choose an OTC product based on your symptoms

Generic Name (Brand Name)

Important Tips

Congestion (*plugged ears, nose or head congestion*)

Oral Decongestants (pill form):

Phenylephrine (Sudafed PE)
Pseudoephedrine (Sudafed)

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)

- 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.

Cough

Dry, hacking cough:

Dextromethorphan (Delsym)

Wet, mucousy cough:

Guaifenesin (Mucinex)

- Avoid cough medications in children younger than 4 years old.
- Hydration helps to naturally loosen and thin mucus to help with cough.

Runny Nose or Sneezing

Antihistamines:

Sedating

Diphenhydramine (Benadryl, Somnex)
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.