

Medicines in My Home - Frequently Asked Questions

1. If a medicine is used for more than one problem and I only have one of those problems, should I use the medicine?

It is better to find and use a medicine that treats only the problem (or symptom) you have. If you use a medicine that treats your problem plus other problems you don't have, then you may be using extra medicine you don't need. Over-the-counter medicines can help you feel better, but they can also cause unwanted side effects. Using extra medicine that you don't need to treat your problem increases the chance of unwanted side effects. It is better to choose a medicine that treats only the problem or problems you have. If you and your parent or guardian aren't sure how to choose, ask a pharmacist or a doctor for help.

2. Why should I read the Warnings section of the Drug Fact label?

You should read the Warnings section because it explains when the medicine shouldn't be used at all and when you should check with a doctor or pharmacist before using the medicine. The Warnings also tell you how the medicine might make you feel, when you should stop using the medicine, and things you shouldn't do while using the medicine. For example, the Warnings section will tell you to avoid using a medicine if you are allergic to its active ingredient.

3. What happens if I use too much of an OTC medicine? Can a medicine harm me if I use more than the recommended dose?

If you use too much of any medicine, tell a grown-up right away. A pharmacist, doctor, or the Poison Control Center can tell you and your parent or guardian if you need to get medical help right away.

What happens when you use too much of an OTC medicine depends on the type of medicine and how much you used. The correct medicine dose is carefully figured out and approved by the Food and Drug Administration. Using more than the recommended dose may not work better than the recommended dose and it may harm you.

4. What will happen if I repeat the dose of medicine sooner than the time it says on the label?

Medicines are chemicals that affect the way your body works. Each medicine works in a person's body for a certain length of time. The Drug Facts label tells you how often to use a medicine based on how long the medicine works in people's bodies. What will happen depends on the medicine and how often you are using it. If you use a medicine too soon, nothing may happen if you only do it once. If you keep using a medicine too often, the medicine can build up in your body to a level that may harm you. Sometimes use of too much medicine can permanently injure your liver, kidneys, or other parts of you.

5. I weigh more than the maximum amount listed on the "Dosing Chart." Can I use this medicine? If so, how much should I use?

If the Directions on the label don't tell you the correct dose for your weight, you either shouldn't use the medicine or you should ask the doctor or pharmacist how much to use. If you (or the child you are giving medicine to) weigh more than the weight shown in the dosing chart, then there is probably another medicine with the same ingredients made for someone your size. If you weigh 95 pounds or more, you can use the adult doses of over-the-counter medicines. If you weigh less than 95 pounds, you should use children's medicines and follow the directions on the dosing chart.

6. I am older than the maximum age listed on the "Dosing Chart." Can I use this medicine? If so, how much should I use?

If you (or the child you are giving a medicine to) weighs less than 95 pounds and is using a children's (or infant's) medicine where the dose is chosen by weight and age, it is better to choose the medicine dose by weight. If you are older than the highest age on the dosing chart but your weight is on the dosing chart, then use the dose recommended for your weight. You can talk with your pharmacist or doctor for the correct medicine and dose. If your weight and your age are higher than the weights and ages listed on the dosing chart, you need to choose a different medicine. If you aren't sure how to choose, speak with a pharmacist or your doctor.

7. On the Drug Facts label, whose telephone number is listed at the end of the label under Questions?

Most companies that make medicines list a phone number and/or a web site where you can get more information about your medicine, ask questions, or report an unexpected or unwanted side effect from your medicine.

8. Does the complete Drug Facts label appear on the product's box, the product's container, or both?

That depends on the medicine. It is best to keep the entire packaging to make sure you have all the information in the Drug Facts label. This will help you use your medicines correctly and safely every time.

9. Is a vitamin an over-the-counter medicine?

A vitamin isn't a medicine. It is a dietary supplement. The part of the Food and Drug Administration that controls dietary supplements is the same part that controls foods sold in the United States. Our country's laws are different for medicines and for dietary supplements. You can read more important information about dietary supplements at the web sites listed below:

Overview of Dietary Supplements (FDA/CFSAN)

<http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/ds-oview.html>

What Dietary Supplements Are You Taking? (FDA/CFSAN)

<http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/ds-take.html>

- What is a vitamin supplement?
- How to recognize a dietary supplement (the dietary supplement label)
- Potential risks of using dietary supplements
- What should I know before using dietary supplements?
- Dietary supplement diary