



## Over-the-Counter Medicines



### Overview

These are the drugs you buy without a prescription. We also call them "OTC" drugs. They may not be as strong as prescription medications. But they treat many common problems. Aspirin, cough syrup and even fluoride toothpaste are all examples of OTC medicines.

### Follow the instructions

When you use an OTC medicine, you need to make sure you do it safely. So read the label. See how much you should take, and how long you should take it. And check for warnings about things to avoid when you take this drug. For example, some OTC drugs, like sleep aids, can make driving unsafe. And many drugs warn you to avoid alcohol.

### When OTC medicines are unsafe

Also, know that OTC medicines aren't good for everyone. Some of these drugs should not be taken during pregnancy. Many are dangerous for kids. And some OTC medicines are unsafe for people who have certain medical conditions. For example, if you have high blood pressure, you may need to avoid nasal decongestants. If you're ever unsure if an OTC medicine is safe for you, talk to your doctor before taking it.

### Conclusion

And finally, if you've tried an OTC drug and your symptoms aren't getting better, you need to see a doctor. You may need a stronger drug or a different type of treatment. Your doctor will create a plan that's right for you.