



OVER-THE-COUNTER MEDICINE SAFETY



Johnson & Johnson CONSUMER HEALTH

DEAR EDUCATOR,

Research shows that young people begin to self-administer over-the-counter (OTC) and prescription (Rx) medication around age 11.¹ Unfortunately, kids often take on this new responsibility with little knowledge about medicine safety. According to the American Association of Poison Control Centers (AAPCC), more than 85,000 children, ages 19 and under, require medical attention each year due to medicine mistakes or misuse.²

The National Association of School Nurses recommends adding medicine safety lessons to the middle school curriculum. To help you act on this recommendation, Johnson & Johnson Consumer Inc., with support from the education specialists at Young Minds Inspired, have created **OTC Medicine Safety**, a free health education program with lesson plan units, student activities, and engaging digital learning tools to help your students use medicine safely and responsibly. The lessons supplement health, science, and English language arts curricula, and are available at www.ymiclassroom.com/otcmedsafety.

To get you started, this poster guide features activities that introduce the topic of over-the-counter medicine safety and will familiarize students with how to read the *Drug Facts* label. It also includes a family letter with OTC medicine safety tips to extend the learning to the home.

Please share this program with other teachers in grades 5-8. And let us know your thoughts by visiting www.ymiclassroom.com/feedback-otcmedsafety. We look forward to your comments.

Sincerely,

Dominic Kinsley, PhD
Editor in Chief
Young Minds Inspired



Questions? Contact YMI toll-free at 1-800-859-8005, or by email at feedback@ymiclassroom.com.

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Developed with support of the National Association of School Nurses.

1. Cheryl Abel, Kerri Johnson, Dustin Waller, Maha Abdalla, and Carroll-Ann W. Goldsmith. Nonprescription medication use and literacy among New Hampshire eighth graders. *Journal of the American Pharmacists Association*. 2012: 777-787.

2. American Association of Poison Control Centers' National Poison Data System. Data covers 2011-2021 annual average, ages 0-19.

ABOUT OVER-THE-COUNTER (OTC) MEDICINE SAFETY

This free, multimedia educational program is designed to inform young people in grades 5-8 and their families about how to use, store, and dispose of OTC medicines safely, as well as how to avoid medicine mistakes and misuse. The program's goal is to build youth's knowledge about OTC medicine safety and encourage responsible behavior *before* they start self-medicating. Throughout the program, an emphasis is placed on reminding young people that they should only take or use medication under adult supervision.



TARGET AUDIENCE

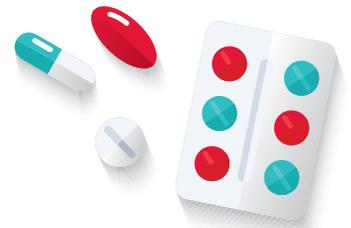
Students in grades 5-6 and grades 7-8

EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

- Introduce students to how to read and use the *Drug Facts* label
- Build critical thinking about how to recognize unsafe behaviors and apply information to make informed decisions about safe medicine use
- Inspire students to use what they've learned to educate their family and community about medicine safety
- Support health, science, and English language arts skills



HOW TO USE THIS PROGRAM



1. OPENING

- To start, ask students: *Why do people take medication?* Explain that medications help people stay healthy or feel better. However, medicine can do more harm than good if we don't have the information we need to make safe choices about its use.
- Emphasize that students should *never* take medicine without the approval and supervision of a parent, caregiver, or other trusted adult.
- Explain that medicines fall into two main categories: prescription or over-the-counter.
 - ♦ **Prescription (Rx) medicines** are specially ordered (prescribed) for you by a doctor or other qualified healthcare practitioner. You can only get them from a pharmacist.
 - ♦ **Over-the-counter (OTC) medicines** can be bought in a pharmacy, drugstore, grocery store, or convenience store. You do not need a doctor's prescription to obtain them.

These medicines might be tablets, liquids, or ointments. Ask students to name some prescription and OTC medicines they are familiar with.

2. POSTER ACTIVITY

- Direct students' attention to the *Drug Facts* label. Explain that all medicines — prescription medicines and OTC medicines — come with dosing directions. The instructions for OTC medicines appear on a *Drug Facts* label designed to help ensure that the medicine is used safely and correctly.
- Compare the *Drug Facts* label to directions for a test. Ask: *What could happen if you don't read the directions for a test? What could happen if you don't read the Drug Facts label before taking a medicine?*
- Explain that when medicine is not used properly, it may not work the way it is supposed to and could even make you feel worse or hurt you. That's why you should always read the **whole Drug Facts** label before taking any medicine.
- Guide your class through the sections of the *Drug Facts* label. Confirm students' understanding as you go. Explain that these sections give us the information we need to use the medicine responsibly.
- After reading through the call-outs, reinforce these messages:
 - ♦ Ingredients may cause allergic reactions.
 - ♦ Medicines can be harmful if you take too much and could cause an overdose.
 - ♦ Medicines may not be effective if you do not take the proper dose.
 - ♦ Mixing certain medicines may cause side effects or harm.
 - ♦ Medicines with the same active ingredient should not be taken at the same time.

- Discuss how to use the **Poison Control Center number** (also called the **Poison Help Line**), **1-800-222-1222**. Anyone can call this number if they have any questions about how to use or give medicine, if there's been a medicine mistake, or if a medicine is swallowed accidentally. Inform students that:
 - ♦ Calls are free and confidential.
 - ♦ Experts answer the phone 24/7, 365 days a year.
 - ♦ Unlike 911, it doesn't have to be an emergency to call.
- Explain that like food, OTC medicines have expiration dates.
- As a review, show the FDA's "Medicines in My Home" video if possible: youtu.be/ht6Th_QfQKE. Pause if necessary and invite students to ask questions.

3. ACTIVITY SHEETS

- Select the activity sheet for your grade level:
 - ♦ **GRADES 5-6: Understanding the Drug Facts Label**
Start a discussion by asking students: *What are the active ingredients in this OTC medicine? What symptoms does it treat?*
 - ♦ **GRADES 7-8: Using the Drug Facts Label**
Start by asking students: *Who might take this OTC medicine? Who should not take it? Do children and adults take the same dose?*
- Review each section of the label on the activity sheet.
- Have students work independently or with a partner to answer the "Think It Through" questions.
- Review the answers and correct any misperceptions students may have. (For an answer key, visit www.ymiclassroom.com/otcmidsafety.)
- Conclude by reminding students that they should *never* take medicine without the approval and supervision of a parent, caregiver, or other trusted adult. And, they should always ask the adult to read and clarify the information on the *Drug Facts* label for them so that they fully understand what to do.

4. FAMILY LETTER

Distribute photocopies of the family letter or email the PDF to families with a note about the program, and ask students to continue the discussion about medicine safety at home.

RESOURCES

- www.ymiclassroom.com/otcmidsafety – OTC Medicine Safety program website
- www.NASN.org – National Association of School Nurses



ONLINE RESOURCES

1. TEACHING UNITS

The complete **OTC Medicine Safety** program includes five detailed teaching units that explore all facets of the *Drug Facts* label and the importance of using and storing OTC medicine safely, and a bonus activity. Each unit is available in two versions, one for grades 5–6 and one for grades 7–8, to accommodate the developmental skill level and educational standards of each group.

GRADES 5-6	
Unit 1: Comparing Over-the-Counter and Prescription Medicines	Unit 4: Exploring the Harms of Medicine Misuse
Unit 2: Understanding the <i>Drug Facts</i> Label	Unit 5: OTC Medicine Safety Review: Informational Text Analysis
Unit 3: Understanding Medicine Measuring Tools, Storage, and Safe Disposal	Bonus Activity: Spread the Word About OTC Medicine Safety!
GRADES 7-8	
Unit 1: Compare Over-the-Counter and Prescription Medicines	Unit 4: Understanding the Dangers of Medicine Misuse
Unit 2: Using the <i>Drug Facts</i> Label	Unit 5: OTC Medicine Safety Review: Informational Text Analysis
Unit 3: The Importance of Medicine Measuring Tools, Storage, and Safe Disposal	Bonus Activity: Spread the Word About OTC Medicine Safety!

2. MINI POSTER

A downloadable letter-size PDF of the program's classroom poster to distribute as a reference tool for activities that focus on the *Drug Facts* label.

3. FAMILY LETTER AND ACTIVITIES

A downloadable/emailable PDF of the program's one-page family letter (in English and Spanish), which informs parents and caregivers about **OTC Medicine Safety** and provides an easy-to-use checklist to make sure their home is "OTC Med-Safe." There are also activities for families to do together.

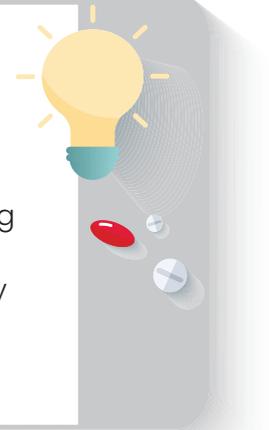
4. INTERACTIVE TRIVIA GAME: WHAT IS OTC MEDICINE SAFETY?

Test students' knowledge with an interactive trivia quiz. You or a student can play the role of emcee. Game can be played with individuals or teams and with or without access to an internet-connected digital whiteboard. [Play time approximately 15–20 minutes.]

LEARN MORE

Check out our website at www.ymiclassroom.com/otcmedsafety

to learn about the wide range of free digital teaching resources available to supplement the introductory medicine safety lessons in this poster teaching kit.



5. OTC MEDICINE SAFETY VIDEO AND QUIZ

This animated digital tool features four young friends who ask trusted adults questions about the dos and don'ts of medicine safety. Short, interactive quiz questions encourage students to review what they've learned as they follow the story! [Play time approximately 10–15 minutes.]

6. MEDICINE SAFETY KAHOOT!

This popular digital quiz platform enables educators to reinforce lessons with fun and engaging quiz questions. Students can play together or on their own. [Play time approximately 15–20 minutes.]

7. THE PERFECT PROJECT DIGITAL STORYBOOK

This illustrated digital storybook supports narrative reading as students follow a group of classmates as they make decisions about medicine safety in different everyday situations. [Play time approximately 10–15 minutes.]

8. HIDDEN HOME HAZARDS DIGITAL ACTIVITY

This interactive digital tool helps drive home the message that a key part of safe medicine use includes storing medicine safely. Students zoom in on different rooms in a house and click on hidden home medicine safety hazards. [Play time approximately 10–15 minutes.]

9. STANDARDS ALIGNMENT

OTC Medicine Safety aligns with health education, as well as science and English language arts standards. An education standards chart can be found on the program site.

What teachers are saying about OTC Medicine Safety

"I like that the program provides factual information about a very important topic. The information is student-friendly while still being very relevant and fact-based."
— Grade 7 Teacher, OH

"I love that the topic is something that is so very relevant and valuable for students that even they will not have to question its importance."
— Middle School Teacher



OVER-THE-COUNTER MEDICINE SAFETY

REPRODUCIBLE ACTIVITY
GRADES 5-6

SKILLS:
Analytical thinking

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Understanding the *Drug Facts* Label

Directions: Think about the discussions you've been having in class about over-the-counter (OTC) medicines and the issues that can arise from not reading and understanding the *Drug Facts* label. Use the sample label pictured here to answer the questions below. Write your answers on a separate sheet of paper.

Think It Through

1. What kind of information might be found in the "Do Not Use" part of the "Warnings" section? Why is it important for someone to see that information?
2. What are the side effects associated with the use of this medicine?
3. What are some reasons that someone might have to contact a doctor before or after taking this medicine?
4. What section of the label tells you the correct dose?
5. What is the Poison Control Center phone number? (This is also called the Poison Help Line.)

Did you know...

Poison Control Centers are staffed with experts, including doctors, nurses, and pharmacists who can help answer questions about medicine or provide help over the phone if there's a medicine mistake or if you come into contact with a poison. Calls are free and private. **Poison Help Line: 1-800-222-1222**



Drug Facts

Active ingredients	Purpose
Ingredient A 100 mg	cough suppressant
Ingredient B 150 mg	nasal decongestant

Uses Temporarily relieves:

- coughing due to minor throat and bronchial irritation
- nasal congestion

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 allergic reaction occurs.

Keep out of reach of children. In case of overdose, get medical help or contact a Poison Control Center right away (1-800-222-1222).

Directions

■ Tablet melts in mouth. Can be taken with or without water.

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 under 12 years	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

Other information

■ store at 20°–25°C (68°–77°F) ■ keep dry

Inactive ingredients

anhydrous citric acid, aspartame, magnesium stearate, maltodextrin, modified food starch, sodium bicarbonate, D&C yellow no. 10

Questions or comments?

Call weekdays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. EST at 1-800-555-5555.





OVER-THE-COUNTER MEDICINE SAFETY

REPRODUCIBLE ACTIVITY
GRADES 7-8

SKILLS:
Analytical thinking

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Using the *Drug Facts* Label

Directions: Think about the discussions you've been having in class about over-the-counter (OTC) medicines and the issues that can arise from not reading and understanding the *Drug Facts* label. Use the sample label pictured here to answer the questions below. Write your answers on a separate sheet of paper.

Think It Through

1. What side effects are associated with the use of this medicine?
2. What are some reasons that someone might have to contact a doctor before or after taking this medicine?
3. What section of the label tells you the correct dose?
4. Why do you think the sections of the *Drug Facts* label appear in this order?
5. What type and design features are used to make the label easy to understand?
6. What is the Poison Control Center phone number? (This is also called the Poison Help Line.)

Did you know...

Poison Control Centers are staffed with experts, including doctors, nurses, and pharmacists who can help answer questions about medicine or provide help over the phone if there's a medicine mistake or if you come into contact with a poison. Calls are free and private.
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OVER-THE-COUNTER MEDICINE SAFETY

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REPRODUCIBLE LETTER
FOR FAMILIES

Dear Parents and Caregivers,

Did you know that more than 85,000 children, ages 19 and under, require medical attention each year due to medicine mistakes or misuse?

As kids get older, they start to take on more responsibility — at home, at school, and even with their health. That is why it's so important for families to help kids learn how to make safe choices *before* they take on a more active role in their self-care, including medicine use.

Since over-the-counter (OTC) medicines can be bought from a store without a doctor's prescription, young people often falsely assume that they don't need to be careful with them. However, OTC medicines can cause harm if they are not used correctly. To prevent medicine mistakes or misuse, make sure all members of your household know to read and follow the *Drug Facts* label.

Your child has already started to learn about the importance of medicine safety at school. Now is the perfect time to build on that knowledge to make sure everyone in your home feels ready to handle medicines responsibly. When families work together to create a medicine action plan, they help to keep everyone safe and healthy.

Use the checklist below to ensure that you keep your family "OTC Ready."



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Medicine Safety Practices

- Make sure all OTC medicines are properly labeled and stored in their original packaging.
- Never mix medicines — keep them in separate labeled containers.
- Teach your children that they should never take any medicine without adult approval and supervision — children should always ask a parent, caregiver, or other trusted adult for help before taking medicines.
- Read and follow the *Drug Facts* label every time you or your children use a medicine.
- Carefully follow the dosage directions on the *Drug Facts* label to avoid an overdose.
- Never use household spoons to measure medicine — only use the dosing device packaged with an OTC medicine.
- Never take medicines with the same active ingredient at the same time to avoid an overdose of that ingredient.
- Communicate with other caregivers in your home to prevent double-dosing errors.
- Call the **Poison Control Center** (also called the **Poison Help Line**) at **1-800-222-1222** if you have any questions or if a medicine mistake occurs.

Safe Medicine Storage and Disposal

- Store all medicines up, away, and out of sight of young children.
- Make sure that child safety caps are locked on all medicines after use.
- Keep the medicine and the dosing device it came with together.
- Remind visitors to keep luggage, purses, or anything else that might have medicines in it, out of children's reach and sight.
- Check the use-by and expiration dates on OTC medicines and safely dispose of any that are outdated.
- Mix leftover or expired OTC medicines with coffee grounds or kitty litter for safe disposal.



Here's to keeping families safe!



Please visit
www.ymiclassroom.com/otcmedsafety-families
for more *OTC Medicine Safety* information,
including games, quizzes, and a storybook.



SEGURIDAD DE LOS OTC MEDICAMENTOS DE VENTA LIBRE

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CARTA REPRODUCIBLE
**PARA LAS
FAMILIAS**

Estimados padres y cuidadores:

¿Sabían que más de 85,000 niños, de 19 años o menos, requieren atención médica cada año debido a errores o al mal uso de los medicamentos?¹

A medida que los niños crecen, comienzan a asumir más responsabilidades: en casa, en la escuela e incluso con su salud. Por eso es tan importante que las familias ayuden a los niños a aprender cómo tomar decisiones seguras antes de asumir un papel más activo en su cuidado personal, incluido el uso de medicamentos.

Dado que los medicamentos de venta libre (OTC) pueden comprarse en una tienda sin receta médica, los jóvenes suelen suponer erróneamente que no necesitan tener cuidado con ellos. Sin embargo, los medicamentos OTC pueden causar daños si no se utilizan de forma correcta. Para evitar errores o usos indebidos de medicamentos, asegúrense de que todos los miembros de su hogar sepan leer y seguir la etiqueta *Drug Facts* (Información del medicamento).

Sus hijos ya han comenzado a aprender sobre la importancia de la seguridad de los medicamentos en la escuela. Este es el momento perfecto para aprovechar ese conocimiento y asegurarse de que todos en su hogar se sientan listos para manejar los medicamentos de manera responsable. Cuando las familias trabajan juntas para crear un plan de acción de medicamentos, ayudan a mantener a todos seguros y saludables.

Utilicen la lista de verificación a continuación para asegurarse de que su familia esté "lista para los medicamentos OTC".



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Desarrollado con el apoyo de la Asociación Nacional de Enfermería

Medidas de seguridad para medicamentos

- Asegúrense de que todos los medicamentos OTC estén debidamente etiquetados y almacenados en su envase original.
- Nunca mezclen medicamentos: consérvenlos en recipientes separados y etiquetados.
- Enséñenles a sus hijos que nunca deben tomar ningún medicamento sin la aprobación y supervisión de un adulto; los niños siempre deben pedir ayuda a un padre, cuidador u otro adulto de confianza antes de tomar medicamentos.
- Lean y sigan la etiqueta *Drug Facts* cada vez que ustedes o sus hijos utilicen un medicamento.
- Sigán con atención las instrucciones de dosificación en la etiqueta *Drug Facts* para evitar una sobredosis.
- Nunca utilicen cucharas domésticas para medir el medicamento, solo utilicen el dosificador que viene con un medicamento OTC.
- Nunca tomen medicamentos con los mismos ingredientes activos al mismo tiempo para evitar una sobredosis de ese ingrediente.
- Comuníquense con otros cuidadores en su hogar para evitar errores de dosis doble.
- Llamen al **Centro de control de envenenamiento** (también llamado **Línea de ayuda por envenenamiento**) al **1-800-222-1222** si tienen alguna pregunta o si se produce un error con un medicamento.

Almacenamiento y eliminación seguros de medicamentos

- Guarden todos los medicamentos en un lugar alto, lejos y fuera de la vista de los niños pequeños.
- Asegúrense de que los tapones de seguridad para niños estén bloqueados en todos los medicamentos después de usarlos.
- Conserve juntos el medicamento y el dosificador con el que vino.
- Recuérdenles a los visitantes que guarden el equipaje, las carteras o cualquier otro elemento que pueda contener medicamentos fuera del alcance y la vista de los niños.
- Comprueben las fechas de caducidad de los medicamentos OTC y desechen de forma segura los que estén caducados.
- Mezclen los medicamentos OTC sobrantes o caducados con granos de café o arena para gatos para desecharlos de manera segura.

¡Por la seguridad de las familias!



Visiten

[www.ymiclassroom.com/
otcmedsafety-families](http://www.ymiclassroom.com/otcmedsafety-families)

para obtener más información sobre la Seguridad de los medicamentos OTC, incluidos juegos, cuestionarios y un libro de cuentos.



1. Sistema Nacional de Datos Toxicológicos de la Asociación Americana de Centros de Control de Envenenamientos. Los datos cubren el promedio anual entre 2011 y 2021, edades de 0 a 19.



The *Drug Facts* label helps you understand how medicines can help you and how to take them safely.

Active Ingredients

Lists the ingredients in the medicine that make it work.

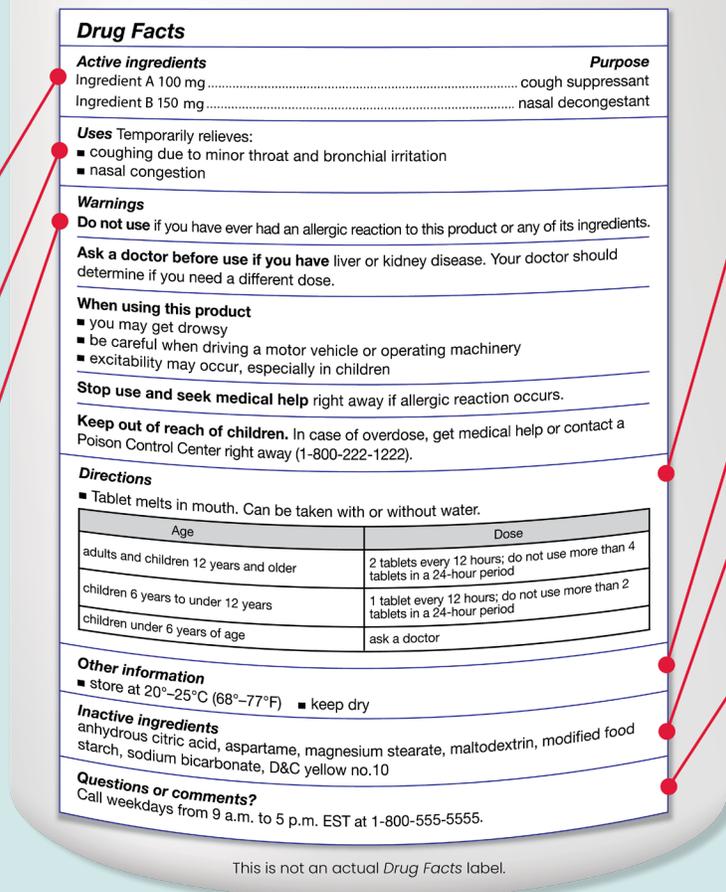
Uses

Describes the symptoms that the medicine treats.

Warnings

Provides important safety information, including side effects, questions you should ask a doctor before taking the medicine, and medicines to avoid using at the same time.

UNDERSTANDING THE DRUG FACTS LABEL



Drug Facts									
Active ingredients	Purpose								
Ingredient A 100 mg.....	cough suppressant								
Ingredient B 150 mg.....	nasal decongestant								
Uses Temporarily relieves:									
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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									
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 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 allergic reaction occurs.									
Keep out of reach of children. In case of overdose, get medical help or contact a Poison Control Center right away (1-800-222-1222).									
Directions									
■ Tablet melts in mouth. Can be taken with or without water.									
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Questions or comments?									
Call weekdays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. EST at 1-800-555-5555.									

All medicines — OTC medicines and prescriptions — should always be taken with the approval and supervision of a parent or trusted adult.

Directions

Tells the amount or “dose” of medicine to take, how often to take it, and how much you can take in one day.

Other Information

Tells how to store the medicine.

Inactive Ingredients

Lists ingredients not intended to treat your symptoms, like preservatives and flavorings.

Questions or Comments?

Tells how to call the manufacturer if you have questions about the medicine.

MEASURE IT CORRECTLY

To get an exact measurement, it is important to only use the dosing device that is provided with the medicine. The *Drug Facts* label tells you how much medicine you should take based on your weight and/or age. Take only one medicine with the same kind of active ingredient at a time.

Fact: Household spoons come in various shapes and sizes, which means they hold different amounts of liquid.



SAFETY TIPS

- **Always** read the entire *Drug Facts* label before using an OTC medicine.
- **Never** take medicines with the same active ingredient at the same time!
- Call the **Poison Control Center** number (also called Poison Help Line) at **1-800-222-1222** if you have **any** medicine questions or concerns.