

EXPLORING THE HARMS OF MEDICINE MISUSE

Students learn how to use medicine safely and that misusing medicine can be harmful.

Time: 40 minutes

OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Define “misuse” as it relates to over-the-counter (OTC) medicines
- Understand why misusing OTC medicines can be harmful
- Identify the steps to take in an OTC medicine misuse situation

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Copies of the following reproducible activity sheets for each student in the class:
 - ♦ **Activity 6: OTC Medicine Safety for the Community**
- **Activity 7: Use vs. Misuse Classroom Activity** (4 pages)
- **OTC Medicine Safety Answer Key**
- **OTC Medicine Safety for Families** (letter in English and Spanish)
- Chart paper (six sheets) for a gallery walk activity
- Computer and whiteboard/digital display screen
- Optional: Computer with internet access for student use
- Optional: **OTC Medicine Safety Post-Assessment Quiz**

Note: All Unit resources and digital assets featured on page 2 can be accessed at www.ymiclassroom.com/lesson-plans/otcmedsafety-teachers_5-6/.

HOW TO USE THIS LESSON PART 1

1. Begin by prompting an open class discussion. Ask students:

- *Do you think OTC medicines are dangerous if they are misused or used in a way other than what is directed by the Drug Facts label or a doctor?*

Allow students to offer opinions. Through a show of hands, tally the “yes” versus “no” opinions on the board.

2. Use the **Use vs. Misuse Classroom Activity** to explore how students’ preconceived ideas can sometimes cloud less obvious facts about a topic. Show only the pictures on each page — sun, potatoes, vitamins, ibuprofen. Do not reveal the “Answer” or “Now You Know” sections. After showing the four pictures, ask students:

- *How are these four items related? Do they have anything in common?*
- *How do people benefit from these items?*

- *Is it possible that these items may be harmful?*

Explain that all four items are safe when used or stored properly, but they can all have detrimental health effects when used or stored improperly.

Go back through the pictures and uncover the answers beneath each one.

Page 1: Sun

Answer: Fifteen minutes of sun per day is essential for maintaining a healthy level of vitamin D, which promotes the retention of calcium, mostly in your bones. Calcium is very important in the development of your bones and teeth. Too much sun, however, may cause skin damage or skin cancer. To protect against damage from the sun’s rays, avoid the sun between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., when its rays are strongest; wear protective clothing; and use a sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or higher, according to the American Skin Association.

Now you know: Use a good sunscreen when outdoors for more than 15 minutes and avoid prolonged sun exposure.

Page 2: Potatoes

Answer: Potatoes are an excellent source of carbohydrates, which your body needs for energy. But potatoes naturally contain solanine, a toxic ingredient that can cause a number of health problems. Solanine thrives in well-lit environments and is present when you see a green tinge under the potato’s skin and experience a bitter taste.

Now you know: Store potatoes in a cool, dark place and be on the lookout for discoloration and bad taste.

Page 3: Vitamins

Answer: Vitamins can be purchased over-the-counter and are widely available. They’re easy to access but can have risks if not used appropriately. They should be taken under the guidance of a parent or trusted adult. Vitamins can be dangerous if they’re misused or if a person isn’t using them in accordance with the *Supplement Facts* label on the bottle.

Now you know: Read the label and talk to a trusted adult before taking vitamins.

Page 4: Ibuprofen

Answer: Ibuprofen has been used for decades for pain relief and is available over-the-counter. When ibuprofen is used as directed, it reduces inflammation (swelling) and can reduce fevers. However, large doses of ibuprofen can cause damage to the stomach or intestines.

Now you know: Follow directions on the *Drug Facts* label and talk to a trusted adult before taking an anti-inflammatory medicine.

(Continued on the next page.)



EXPLORING THE HARMS OF MEDICINE MISUSE (CONTINUED)

PART 2

1. Discuss how the four items on the **Use vs. Misuse Classroom Activity** pages are common in our lives and appear safe, but there are specific guidelines for using or consuming them. If you do not follow the safety precautions for proper use and storage, there could be harmful consequences. Explain that when you dig a little deeper, you often discover new, important information that you might ordinarily overlook. Ask students:

- *Can you think of other items you come in contact with regularly that are safe when used properly, but dangerous when misused?*

Answers may include appliances, cars, medicines, cleaning supplies, etc.

2. Select medicine as a topic for further discussion. Post the six questions below on chart paper around the room. Have students rotate through the six stations and write their responses to each question on their own sheets of paper. Begin the activity with this prompt:

- *Are the actions described at each station safe or dangerous? If dangerous, what negative effects could result from the action?*
 - a. *Not reading and following the Drug Facts label*
 - b. *Taking more than the recommended dose*
 - c. *Redosing more frequently than directed on the label*
 - d. *Using different medicines with the same active ingredient at the same time*
 - e. *Taking medicines for longer than directed on the label*
 - f. *Taking medicines for reasons or symptoms other than what is directed on the label*

If students have internet access, they might research the negative effects as they rotate through the stations. Alternatively, students can brainstorm ideas with a partner, then share their answers with the entire class.

3. Discuss the students' responses. See the **Answer Key** for suggested responses. Emphasize that all the scenarios are dangerous because there are potentially harmful consequences when someone misuses OTC medicines. The *Drug Facts* label provides instructions for using the medicine safely. OTC medicines can be harmful if misused or if not used as directed by the *Drug Facts* label.
4. Ask students:
 - *What is the perception among your friends about misusing prescription or OTC medicines?*Answers may include: Misusing prescription drugs is dangerous and can be deadly; no one really gets hurt from misusing OTC medicines.

- *Based on the information you've learned in OTC Medicine Safety, do you believe that there is a need to inform people about the dangers of misusing OTC medicines?*

Answers may include: Parents and guardians should be informed so they can keep children safe; younger children should be informed so they can avoid dangerous situations.

5. Distribute the **OTC Medicine Safety for the Community** activity sheet and explain that it can be used to launch a community-wide safety campaign. For example, a coalition (or group) of families, students, and community leaders might use the activity sheet to submit a collection of letters to local town officials that encourages getting the word out about safe medicine use. Working together in this way, they would show collective support for making their communities and schools safer places for children and their families, and could help disseminate information about the safe use and storage of OTC medicines and the dangers of misuse. Invite students to get the ball rolling by writing their own persuasive letters, based on what they have learned about OTC medicine safety or what they might discover on the internet.
6. **Optional:** Assess what students have learned about OTC medicine safety by having them complete the **OTC Medicine Safety Post-Assessment Quiz**. Compare the completed quizzes to students' pre-assessments to measure the growth of their knowledge.
7. **Family/Home Connection:** If you have not already done so, distribute the **OTC Medicine Safety for Families** letter for students to take home, or include the PDF in email correspondence to parents and caregivers. Encourage students to share what they have learned about the *Drug Facts* label and why it is important. Suggest that students post the Poison Help Line phone number in a visible place in their home and get family members to save the number in their mobile phones. **Reinforce the importance of always communicating with a trusted adult before taking any medicine, and only taking medicine with the approval and supervision of a parent or trusted adult.**

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

Discuss the impact of visuals or videos in helping to increase the safe use and storage of OTC medicines and have students research photos or videos that deal with taking medicine safety precautions at home. They might start their research at the **FDA Medicines in My Home Video Room**.



OVER-THE-COUNTER MEDICINE SAFETY



GRADES 5-6
UNIT 4, ACTIVITY 7

SKILLS:
Critical thinking

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Use vs. Misuse



ANSWER

Fifteen minutes of sun per day is essential for maintaining a healthy level of vitamin D, which promotes the retention of calcium, mostly in your bones. Calcium is very important for bone development and strong teeth. Too much sun, however, may cause skin damage and skin cancer. To protect against damage from the sun's rays, it is important to avoid the sun between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., when the sun's rays are strongest; wear protective clothing; and use a sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or higher, according to the American Skin Association.



Now you know...

Use a good sunscreen when outdoors for more than 15 minutes and avoid prolonged sun exposure.





OVER-THE-COUNTER MEDICINE SAFETY

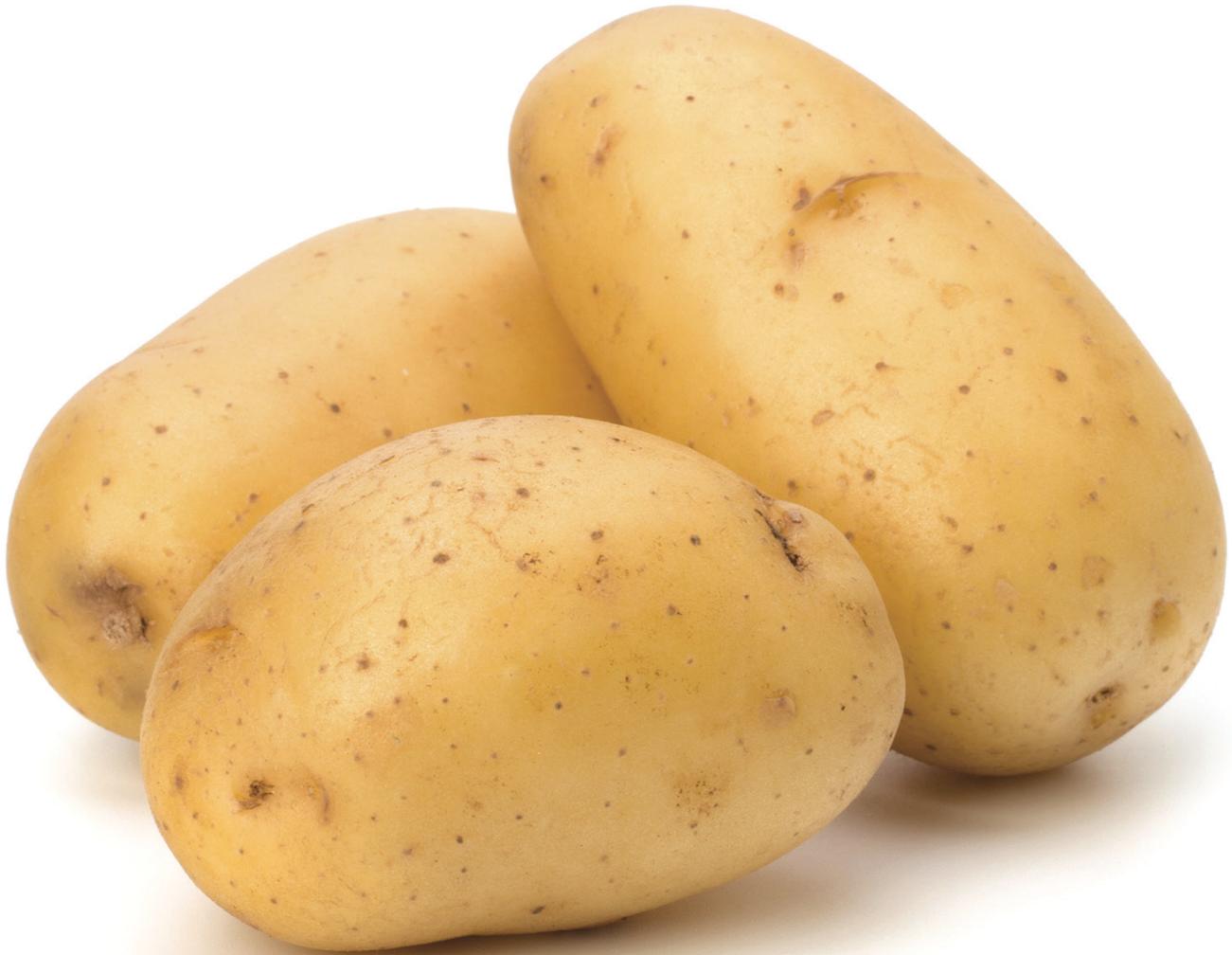


GRADES 5-6
UNIT 4, ACTIVITY 7

SKILLS:
Critical thinking

Johnson & Johnson CONSUMER HEALTH

Use vs. Misuse



ANSWER

Potatoes are an excellent source of carbohydrates, which your body needs for energy. But potatoes naturally contain solanine, a toxic ingredient that can cause a number of health problems. Solanine thrives in well-lit environments and is present when you see a green tinge under the potato's skin and experience a bitter taste.



Now you know...

Store potatoes in a cool, dark place and be on the lookout for the discoloration and bad taste.



OVER-THE-COUNTER MEDICINE SAFETY



GRADES 5-6
UNIT 4, ACTIVITY 7

SKILLS:
Critical thinking

Johnson & Johnson CONSUMER HEALTH

Use vs. Misuse



ANSWER

Like all over-the-counter medicines, vitamins should not be taken without the approval and supervision of a parent or trusted adult. Vitamins can be dangerous if they're misused or if a person isn't using them in accordance with the *Supplement Facts* label on the bottle.



Now you know...

Read the label with a trusted adult before taking vitamins.



OVER-THE-COUNTER MEDICINE SAFETY



GRADES 5-6
UNIT 4, ACTIVITY 7

SKILLS:
Critical thinking

Johnson & Johnson CONSUMER HEALTH

Use vs. Misuse



ANSWER

Ibuprofen has been used for decades for pain relief and is available over-the-counter. When ibuprofen is used as directed, it reduces inflammation (swelling) and can also reduce fevers. However, large doses of ibuprofen can cause damage to the stomach or intestines.



Now you know...

Follow directions on the *Drug Facts* label and talk to a trusted adult before taking an anti-inflammatory medicine.



Unit 1, Activity 1:

OVER-THE-COUNTER VS. PRESCRIPTION MEDICINES

1. Both
2. Prescription
3. Prescription
4. OTC [remind students that prescription labels and directions must be read carefully as well.]
5. OTC
6. Both
7. Both

Unit 2, Activity 2:

UNDERSTANDING THE DRUG FACTS LABEL

1. Answers might include warnings that the medicine might cause an allergic reaction, that it should not be used when taking certain other medicines, and other reasons why a person should not take the medicine. It's important that a person read this information before taking medicine because it can help avoid preventable side effects.
2. Side effects may include drowsiness and/or excitability, particularly for children.
3. Answers may include: A doctor should be consulted before taking this medicine if you have liver or kidney disease, and before giving the medicine to children under 6 years of age. A doctor should also be consulted if allergic reaction or overdose occurs.
4. The "Directions" section.
5. 1-800-222-1222

Unit 2, Activity 3:

FIND A DRUG FACTS LABEL SCAVENGER HUNT

Answers will vary.

Unit 3, Activity 4:

RESPONSIBLE MEDICINE DOSING

1. At 8 a.m. the next day. After that, no more doses should be given until 8 p.m.
2. a. 2.5 mL
b. 2.5 mL
3. Using anything other than the dosing device that is packaged with the medicine can result in an inaccurate dose.
4. A *Drug Facts* label might suggest that people contact a doctor before use for a variety of reasons. These reasons may include factors such as age, health conditions, or other medicines they are taking that may require special instruction or may make the medicine inappropriate for certain people.
5. Answers could include talking with family members about the information provided on the *Drug Facts* label; use of proper dosing devices; the consequences of not using proper dosing devices; the importance of understanding dosing information.

Unit 3, Activity 5:

SAFE MEDICINE STORAGE

Any response that identifies medication stored in a location that is not up, away, and out of sight would be acceptable. The medication storage errors shown in the picture are as follows:

1. Open purse with pain relief bottle sticking out of the top
2. Medicine left out on the nightstand with dosage cup
3. Toiletry bag hanging low from doorknob inside closet with vitamin bottle showing
4. Medicine bottles visible and accessible inside cabinet below kitchen sink
5. Bottle of cough medicine on the counter and a teaspoon with a trace of medicine visible on spoon (should be using the dosing device and stored up and away)
6. Allergy medicine on the table next to vase

Unit 4, Activity 6:

OTC MEDICINE SAFETY FOR THE COMMUNITY

Answers will vary.

Unit 5, Activity 8:

EDITING AN OTC MEDICINE SAFETY ARTICLE

Answers will vary.





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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Developed with support of the National Association of School Nurses.

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.
- Conserven 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

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.



OVER-THE-COUNTER MEDICINE SAFETY



GRADES 5-8
POST-ASSESSMENT

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Post-Assessment

Types of Medicine What type of medicine is best described by each statement below? Check only one.

Q1. This is medicine a doctor orders for you, and is available only from a pharmacist.	
Prescription medicine	
Over-the-counter (OTC) medicine	
Not sure	

Q2. This is medicine bought in a drugstore, pharmacy, or grocery store without having to get a doctor's permission.	
Prescription medicine	
Over-the-counter (OTC) medicine	
Not sure	

Medicine Safety

Q3. Are the following statements True or False? Check one answer for each row.	TRUE	FALSE	NOT SURE
If you use a household or kitchen spoon to measure liquid medicines, you can be sure you will get the right dose.			
You can't be harmed by over-the-counter medicines.			
It's okay to take two medicines with the same active ingredient at the same time.			
It's okay to use someone else's prescription medicine if you have the same symptoms they had when they got it.			
It's okay to take your leftover prescription medicine later if you get sick again.			
It's okay to take more medicine than what is directed on the label if you are very sick.			
In a medicine, an active ingredient is what relieves a person's symptoms.			
The <i>Drug Facts</i> label tells you what symptoms the medicine treats.			
The <i>Drug Facts</i> label gives you the dosage information (how much medicine to take).			

Q4. Are the following statements True or False? Check one answer for each row.	TRUE	FALSE	NOT SURE
A pharmacist can answer questions about over-the-counter medicines.			
All medicines have an expiration date.			
Children should not use prescription medicine without the permission of their parent or a trusted adult.			
Medicine should be kept in a place where children can't reach it.			
If you and your friend are the same age, it will be safe for you to take the same dose of an over-the-counter medicine.			
Prescription medicine cannot be bought without a doctor's permission.			

(Continued on the next page.)



OVER-THE-COUNTER MEDICINE SAFETY



GRADES 5-8
POST-ASSESSMENT

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Post-Assessment (continued)

Medicine Safety

Q5. Are the following statements True or False? Check one answer for each row.	TRUE	FALSE	NOT SURE
Children over 12 can take over-the-counter medicine without a parent's permission if they carefully read the label.			
Medicine should be stored in the container it came in.			
One gulp from a bottle of liquid medicine is exactly one tablespoon of medicine.			
Over-the-counter medicines can be dangerous when misused.			
Prescription medicine can be found on the shelves in some stores.			
Prescription medicine is meant to be used by one person.			

Q6. Are the following statements True or False? Check one answer for each row.	TRUE	FALSE	NOT SURE
The Poison Help Line is a good place to call if someone has taken too much medicine.			
Medicine should be kept on the kitchen counter so you remember to take it.			
Taking more medicine than directed will help you feel better faster.			
Taking more than one medicine with the same active ingredient will help you feel better faster.			
If you have questions about an over-the-counter medicine you have not taken before, you should ask a friend who has taken it before.			
You can call the Poison Help Line even if it isn't an emergency.			

Pre/Post-Assessment Quiz

Types of Medicine What type of medicine is best described by each statement below? Check only one.

Q1. This is medicine a doctor orders for you, and is available only from a pharmacist.

Prescription medicine

✓

Q2. This is medicine bought in a drugstore, pharmacy, or grocery store without having to get a doctor's permission.

Over-the-counter (OTC) medicine

✓

Medicine Safety

Q3. Are the following statements True or False? Check one answer for each row.

TRUE

FALSE

If you use a household or kitchen spoon to measure liquid medicines, you can be sure you will get the right dose.

✓

You can't be harmed by over-the-counter medicines.

✓

It's okay to take two medicines with the same active ingredient at the same time.

✓

It's okay to use someone else's prescription medicine if you have the same symptoms they had when they got it.

✓

It's okay to take your leftover prescription medicine later if you get sick again.

✓

It's okay to take more medicine than what is directed on the label if you are very sick.

✓

In a medicine, an active ingredient is what relieves a person's symptoms.

✓

The *Drug Facts* label tells you what symptoms the medicine treats.

✓

The *Drug Facts* label gives you the dosage information (how much medicine to take).

✓

Q4. Are the following statements True or False? Check one answer for each row.

TRUE

FALSE

A pharmacist can answer questions about over-the-counter medicines.

✓

All medicines have an expiration date.

✓

Children should not use prescription medicine without the permission of their parent or a trusted adult.

✓

Medicine should be kept in a place where children can't reach it.

✓

If you and your friend are the same age, it will be safe for you to take the same dose of an over-the-counter medicine.

✓

Prescription medicine cannot be bought without a doctor's permission.

✓

(Continued on the next page.)

Pre/Post-Assessment Quiz (continued)

Medicine Safety		
Q5. Are the following statements True or False? Check one answer for each row.	TRUE	FALSE
Children over 12 can take over-the-counter medicine without a parent's permission if they carefully read the label.		✓
Medicine should be stored in the container it came in.	✓	
One gulp from a bottle of liquid medicine is exactly one tablespoon of medicine.		✓
Over-the-counter medicines can be dangerous when misused.	✓	
Prescription medicine can be found on the shelves in some stores.		✓
Prescription medicine is meant to be used by one person.	✓	
Q6. Are the following statements True or False? Check one answer for each row.	TRUE	FALSE
The Poison Help Line is a good place to call if someone has taken too much medicine.	✓	
Medicine should be kept on the kitchen counter so you remember to take it.		✓
Taking more medicine than directed will help you feel better faster.		✓
Taking more than one medicine with the same active ingredient will help you feel better faster.		✓
If you have questions about an over-the-counter medicine you have not taken before, you should ask a friend who has taken it before.		✓
You can call the Poison Help Line even if it isn't an emergency.	✓	