

# UNDERSTANDING THE DRUG FACTS LABEL

Students learn how to use the information on the *Drug Facts* label.

**TIME:** Two 40-minute class periods

## OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Identify the *Drug Facts* label and learn the terms used on it
- Know the importance of reading and understanding all the information on the *Drug Facts* label
- Learn the potential consequences of not reading and understanding all the information on the *Drug Facts* label
- Identify the steps to take in the event of a medicine mistake

## MATERIALS NEEDED

- Copies of the following reproducible activity sheets for each student in the class:
  - ♦ **Activity 2: Understanding the *Drug Facts* Label**
  - ♦ **Activity 3: Find a *Drug Facts* Label Scavenger Hunt**
  - ♦ **Over-the-Counter Medicine Safety Mini Poster**
- **Over-the-Counter Medicine Safety Classroom Poster**
- FDA's "**Medicines in My Home**" video
- **OTC Medicine Safety Answer Key**
- **OTC Medicine Safety for Families** (letter in English and Spanish)
- Sample OTC medicine packaging:
  - ♦ Two empty bottles of a fever reducer (if possible, both a liquid and a solid-dose product)
  - ♦ Two empty bottles of pain reliever
  - ♦ Two empty bottles of antacids
  - ♦ Two empty packages of cough drops
- Paper, pens/pencils
- Computer with internet access and whiteboard/digital display screen (for video)
- Optional: **The Perfect Project Digital Storybook**

**Note:** All Unit resources and digital assets featured on page 2 can be accessed at [www.ymiclassroom.com/lesson-plans/otcmedsafety-teachers\\_5-6/](http://www.ymiclassroom.com/lesson-plans/otcmedsafety-teachers_5-6/).

## HOW TO USE THIS LESSON

1. Begin by focusing students on the overall importance of reading directions. Ask: *What could happen if you only read part of the directions on a test?*

2. Discuss the students' responses and emphasize the importance of reading informational text carefully and in its entirety. Otherwise, you might miss some key piece of information that is vital to completing a task properly or getting the desired results.
3. Direct students' attention to the *Drug Facts* label on the poster (displayed on a whiteboard, if possible). Explain that all over-the-counter medicines come with a *Drug Facts* label designed to help make sure the medicine is used safely and correctly. The labels are required by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (the FDA).
4. Show the FDA's "**Medicines in My Home**" video if possible. Pause the video when necessary to highlight the different sections on the *Drug Facts* label and invite student questions.
5. Distribute copies of the **mini poster** to students. As you review each section of the *Drug Facts* label, have students follow along on the handout and read the description of each section aloud.
6. Start with the "Directions" section of the *Drug Facts* label. Explain that every medicine comes with dosing instructions that tell how much to take and how often to take it. The dosing instructions for OTC medicines appear in the "Directions" section of the *Drug Facts* label. The purpose of these instructions is to help make sure that the medicine is taken correctly. Emphasize that when the instructions are not followed correctly, the medicine may not work the way it is meant to. It may even make you feel worse or hurt you. That's why you should always read the **whole** *Drug Facts* label before taking any medicine and follow all directions on the label. Remember, only take or use medicine under adult supervision. Have a student read the description of the "Directions" section of the label.
7. Continue reviewing the remaining sections of the *Drug Facts* label by having a student read each section description aloud and then discussing why this information is important for medicine safety.
8. Reinforce the new vocabulary words featured on the label. Create a vocabulary list, explaining that these terms provide us with the information we need to use medicine responsibly. Key Terms:

- **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.

(Continued on the next page.)



## UNDERSTANDING THE **DRUG FACTS LABEL** (CONTINUED)

- **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.
9. To reinforce students’ understanding of the label, divide the class into eight groups and give one sample OTC medicine container to each group. Have each group share answers to the following questions:
- *What symptoms does the medicine treat?*
  - *How is a person supposed to take the medicine?*
  - *Are there any warnings about the medicine?*
  - *What are the medicine’s active ingredients?*  
*Are there inactive ingredients?*
  - *What other information can you find on the Drug Facts label?*
10. Explore the consequences of using OTC medicines incorrectly. Ask students what they think could happen if someone did not read all the information on the *Drug Facts* label. Discuss these possible consequences:
- Ingredients may cause allergic reactions.
  - Medicines can be harmful if you take too much and may not be effective if you do not take the proper dose.
  - Certain medicines can interact with other medicines and may cause side effects or harm when mixed.
  - Many medicines contain the same active ingredients and should never be taken at the same time.
11. Point out the **Poison Control Center** (also called the **Poison Help Line**) phone number on the *Drug Facts* label, **1-800-222-1222**. Explain that anyone can call this number to ask any questions about a medicine. It is not just for reporting that someone may have been poisoned. You can call to ask how to take or give a medicine or what to do if there’s been a medicine mistake — for example, if someone took a medicine by accident.
12. Share the following with students:
- Calls to the Poison Help Line are free.
  - All calls are confidential.
  - Medical experts answer the phone 24/7, 365 days a year.
  - Unlike 911, it doesn’t have to be an emergency to call.
- Call with questions or for information, or if you have an emergency.
- Poison center experts get more than 2 million calls a year about all kinds of things. They have heard everything, so don’t be embarrassed to call.
13. Ask students if they notice anything else their sample OTC medicines have in common. Point out that they all have an “Expiration Date,” after which the medicine should not be used.
14. Distribute copies of the **Understanding the Drug Facts Label** activity sheet. Have students complete the “Think It Through” questions and review the answers as a class. See the **Answer Key** for suggested responses.
15. For more practice reading the *Drug Facts* label, distribute copies of the **Find a Drug Facts Label Scavenger Hunt** activity sheet for students to complete with a trusted adult at home. Explain that they should look at the *Drug Facts* labels on OTC medicines in their home to find medicines that have the information shown in each box. When they find a match, they write the name of the medicine in the box. Have students share their findings.
16. **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

Share *The Perfect Project* Digital Storybook with your students. Discuss the questions at the end of the story and try the experiment as a class!





## 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:

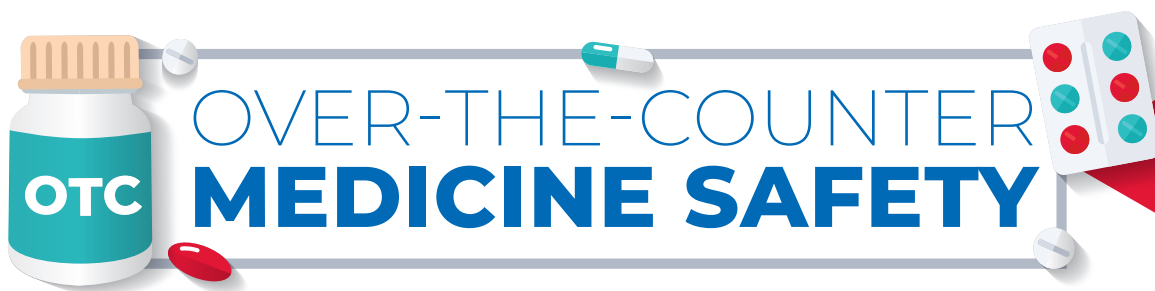
### OTC MEDICINE SAFETY FOR THE COMMUNITY

Answers will vary.

## Unit 5, Activity 8:

### EDITING AN OTC MEDICINE SAFETY ARTICLE

Answers will vary.



## 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



GRADES 5-6  
UNIT 2, ACTIVITY 3

**SKILLS:**

Critical thinking,  
reading informational text

## Find a *Drug Facts Label* Scavenger Hunt

**Directions:** With a trusted adult, read the **Drug Facts label** on OTC medicines in your home to find an example for as many of the following as you can. Write the name of the medicine in the appropriate box.

Includes a warning about allergic reactions	Says to take the medicine every 4 to 6 hours	Instructs you to ask a doctor before use	Says to use the medicine to relieve minor aches and pains
Warns that you may get drowsy when using this medicine	Has different instructions for adults and children under 12	Says to store the medicine away from excessive moisture	Lists more than one active ingredient
Says to take the medicine every 8 hours	Includes a sore throat warning	Says to keep the medicine out of reach of children	Says to use the medicine to relieve heartburn
Provides the dosage in milligrams	Includes the Poison Help Line (1-800-222-1222)	Find two medicines that should not be taken at the same time	Should not be taken if you are allergic to corn



**REMEMBER:** Only take medicine with the approval and supervision of a parent or trusted adult.







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	
<b>Active ingredients</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
Ingredient A 100 mg	cough suppressant
Ingredient B 150 mg	nasal decongestant
<b>Uses</b> Temporarily relieves:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>coughing due to minor throat and bronchial irritation</li> <li>nasal congestion</li> </ul>	
<b>Warnings</b>	
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.	
<b>When using this product</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>you may get drowsy</li> <li>be careful when driving a motor vehicle or operating machinery</li> <li>excitability may occur, especially in children</li> </ul>	
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).	
<b>Directions</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tablet melts in mouth. Can be taken with or without water.</li> </ul>	
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
<b>Other information</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>store at 20°–25°C (68°–77°F) ■ keep dry</li> </ul>	
<b>Inactive ingredients</b>	
anhydrous citric acid, aspartame, magnesium stearate, maltodextrin, modified food starch, sodium bicarbonate, D&C yellow no.10	
<b>Questions or comments?</b>	
Call weekdays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. EST at 1-800-555-5555.	

This is not an actual *Drug Facts* label.

Check out the new **OTC Medicine Safety** videos and trivia game at [ymiclassroom.com/otcmedsafety-multimedia](http://ymiclassroom.com/otcmedsafety-multimedia).

### 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. Never take medicines with the same active ingredient at the same time.

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



VS.



measuring spoon



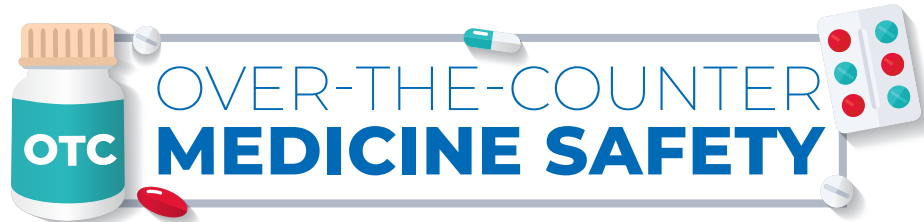
flatware spoon



plastic spoon

## SAFETY TIPS

- Only take medicine with adult supervision and approval.
- Always** read the entire *Drug Facts* label before using an OTC medicine.
- Call the **Poison Control Center** number (also called Poison Help Line) at **1-800-222-1222** if you have **any** medicine questions or concerns.



## 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?<sup>1</sup>**

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](http://www.ymiclassroom.com/otcmedsafety-families)**  
for more *OTC Medicine Safety* resources, including two new animated videos: *A Social Media Challenge* and *Sidelined at Practice*.



# SEGURIDAD DE LOS OTC MEDICAMENTOS DE VENTA LIBRE



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?**<sup>1</sup>

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 sobre el 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".**



Organizado por



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Desarrollado con el apoyo de la Asociación Nacional de Enfermeras de las Escuelas (National Association of School Nurses).

### 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!



Visite

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

para obtener más recursos sobre la *Seguridad de los medicamentos OTC*, incluidos dos videos animados nuevos: *A Social Media Challenge* (Un desafío de las redes sociales) y *Sideline at Practice* (A un costado durante la práctica).

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.