

USING THE *DRUG FACTS* LABEL

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

TIME: 40 minutes

OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Identify the *Drug Facts* label and learn the terms used on the label
- 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: Using 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)
- Assortment of empty OTC medicine containers (e.g., bottles of fever-reducer, pain reliever, antacids, and antihistamine, and packages of cough drops)
- Paper, pens/pencils
- Optional: 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_7-8.

HOW TO USE THIS LESSON

1. Ask students to describe a time when they did not read or follow directions and faced unpleasant consequences (e.g., on a test/homework assignment, playing a game, cooking/baking, etc.). Discuss responses. Emphasize the importance of reading informational text carefully and in its entirety in order to understand key information or directions that are vital to completing a task

properly or getting the desired results.

2. Direct students' attention to the *Drug Facts* label on the classroom poster or mini poster. Explain that all medicines come with directions. Over-the-counter medicines come with a *Drug Facts* label designed to help make sure that the medicine is used safely and correctly. The labels are required by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (the FDA).
3. Ask students: *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 and follow all the directions on the label. Remember, only take or use medicine under adult supervision.
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. Explain that every medicine is unique and has certain ingredients that enable it to treat specific symptoms. Use the poster to show this information in the "Active Ingredients" and "Uses" sections of the *Drug Facts* label. Have students read the descriptions of these sections aloud.
7. Move down to 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. Have a student read the description of the "Directions" section of the label.
8. 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.

(Continued on the next page.)



USING THE DRUG FACTS LABEL (CONTINUED)

9. To reinforce students' understanding of the label, divide the class into small groups and give each one a sample OTC medicine container. Have students 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 or side effects like drowsiness or nausea.
 - 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 or with foods to cause unpleasant or harmful side effects.
 - Many medicines contain the same active ingredients, and should never be taken at the same time.
11. Point out the **Poison Control Center phone number** (also called the **Poison Help Line**) 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 that 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 the **Using the Drug Facts Label** activity sheet. Have students complete the "Think It Through" questions on the activity sheet 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 with an adult 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. After they complete this activity, 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:

COMPARE OVER-THE-COUNTER VS. PRESCRIPTION (RX) MEDICINES

Part 1

1. Both
2. Prescription (Rx) medicine
3. Prescription (Rx) medicine
4. Both
5. Over-the-Counter (OTC) medicine
6. Both
7. Both

Part 2

1. Prescription (Rx)
2. Don't know (not enough information)
3. OTC

Unit 2, Activity 2:

USING THE DRUG FACTS LABEL

1. Side effects may include drowsiness and/or excitability, especially in children
2. 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 an allergic reaction or overdose occurs.
3. The **Directions** section.
4. Answers could include that the *Drug Facts* label appears in a standardized format for consumers' ease of use and understanding in what a medicine does and how to use it safely. The label allows consumers to know where to look for information to make informed choices relevant to their health situation. Most serious warnings are presented first as it is helpful to convey these important safety messages to consumers.¹
5. Answers might include: Uniform formatting on the label: Use of bolded and italicized headers and bulleted information within sections increases readability; use of bolded font emphasizes important safety information, such as "Keep out of reach of children," "Stop use and seek medical help right away."
6. 1-800-222-1222

Unit 2, Activity 3:

FIND A DRUG FACTS LABEL SCAVENGER HUNT

Answers will vary.

Unit 3, Activity 4:

ACCURATE MEDICINE DOSING

1. Olivia is 13 years old. The proper dose for adults and children 12 years of age and older is 5 ml two times per day. The dose may be repeated every 12 hours while symptoms last. Olivia's reasoning might be that since it is a new day that she can take another dose of medicine. This is an error as no more doses should be given until 9 am. The label directs that it is not safe to take more than 10 ml in 24 hours.
2. Miguel is 11 years old. The proper dose for children under 12 years of age is 2.5 ml two times per day. Taking 5 ml once a day can result in an overdose and potential side effects.
3. Using anything other than the dosing device that is packaged with the medicine can result in an inaccurate dose.

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 AWARENESS IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Answers will vary.

Unit 5, Activity 8:

OTC MEDICINE SAFETY ARTICLE

Answers will vary.

1. <https://www.fda.gov/media/150098/download>;

2. <https://www.fda.gov/drugs/information-consumers-and-patients-drugs/otc-drug-facts-label>



OVER-THE-COUNTER MEDICINE SAFETY



GRADES 7-8
UNIT 2, ACTIVITY 2

SKILLS:
Analytical thinking

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.
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 7-8
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	Includes directions that say to take the medicine every 4 to 6 hours	Instructs you to ask a doctor before use	Is used to relieve minor aches and pains
Is a medicine you may not want to take if you need to be alert for a soccer game	Has different instructions for adults and children under 12	Should not be stored near a shower	Lists more than one active ingredient
Should be taken every 8 hours	Includes a sore throat warning	Should be kept out of reach of children	Is used 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.

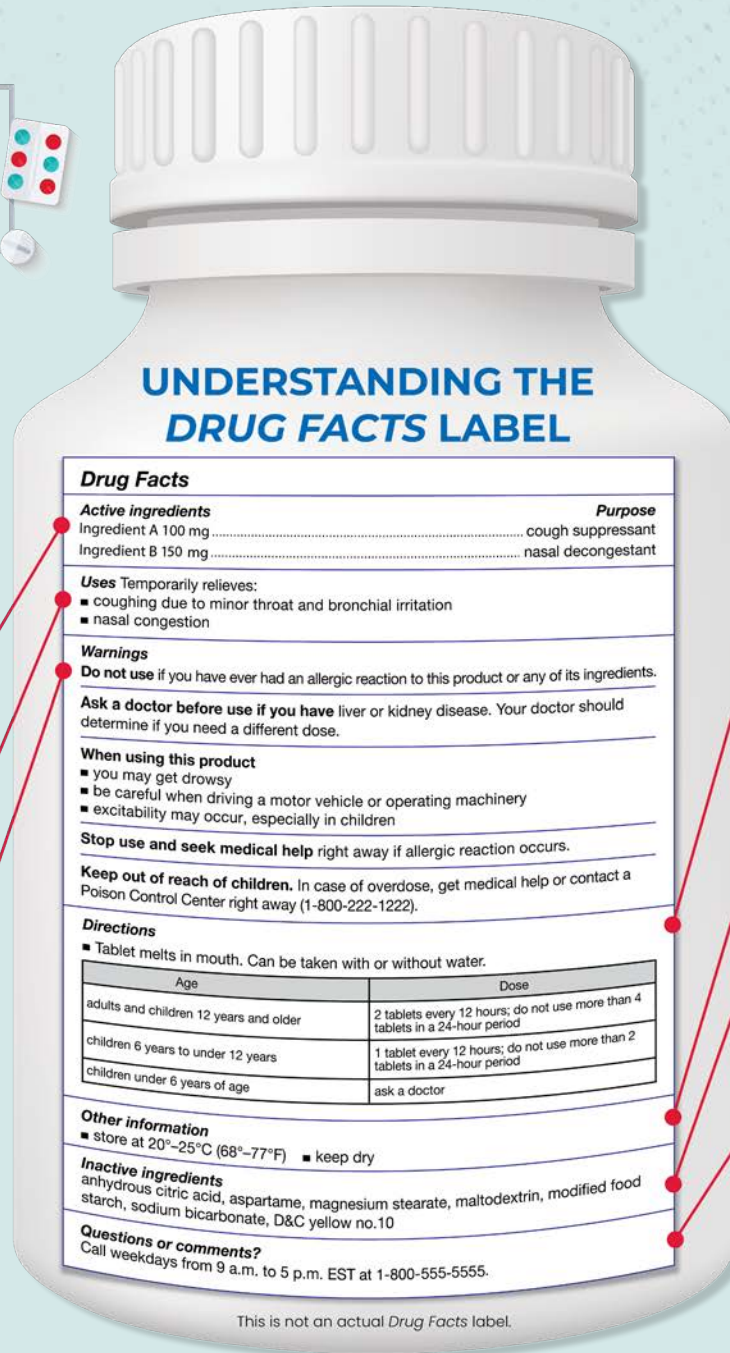
Uses

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



This is not an actual *Drug Facts* label.



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.



dosage cup

vs.



measuring spoon



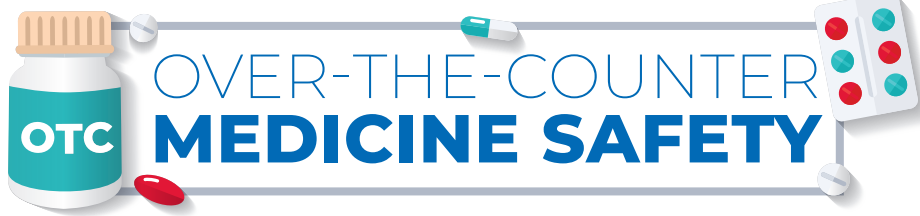
flatware spoon



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.



OVER-THE-COUNTER MEDICINE SAFETY

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* resources, including two new animated videos: *A Social Media Challenge* and *Sidelined at Practice*.

1. America’s Poison Centers’ National Poison Data System. Data covers 2011–2021 annual average, ages 0–19.



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?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 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: consérvelos 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!



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.

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).

