

# LifeSmarts U: Health & Safety

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# LifeSmarts

*Learn it. Live it.*



LifeSmarts is a program of the National Consumers League

# Medicine 101

The basics about over-the-counter  
and prescription drugs.

# Over-the-counter and prescription medications are **drugs**

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Drugs are “substances for treatment, or prevention of disease; intended to affect the structure or function of the body.”

# A drug fact

- **Medicines**, or drugs, change the way the body works.





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The Food and Drug Administration regulates both over-the-counter and prescription drugs.

# Prescription and OTC drugs are tested

- The **Food and Drug Administration** is responsible to make sure drug manufacturing processes and the drugs themselves are safe and effective.



# OTC

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**Over-the-counter medicine**—medicine you buy off-the-shelf without a doctor's order.

# Characteristics of OTCs

- The potential for misuse and abuse is low
- Consumers can use them for self-diagnosed conditions
- They can be adequately labeled for safe consumer use
- Health practitioners are not needed for the safe and effective use of the product



# FDA approved OTCs must be

- Safe
- Effective
- Manufactured safely
- Labeled with a Drug Facts Label that is easy to understand



# The OTC user is responsible to



- Self-diagnose
- Self-treat
- Self-manage their medicine and their illness

# There are advantages to OTCs

- They are easy to obtain
- People have quick access to medicine
- Patients can educate themselves about the medicine by reading and using the Drug Facts Label



# And there are risks

- Misdiagnosis
- Delay in getting an accurate diagnosis from a health care professional
- Taking medicine incorrectly



# Some people do not understand

- “More is not better”
- They need to take as directed on the Drug Facts Label
- Drugs can cause serious illness or even be fatal if taken incorrectly



# Use all medicine with caution



Some risks are not related to the medicines themselves, but to the people who use them.

# Prescription Medicine-Rx

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**Prescription** medicine is medicine you purchase from a pharmacy with a health care professional's order.

Prescription drugs are also called **Legend drugs**.

# Who can write a prescription?

Physicians—M.D. and D.O. and other health care professionals including:

- Veterinarians
- Podiatrists
- Physician Assistants
- Dentists
- Optometrists
- Nurse Practitioners



# What are the differences between prescription and over-the-counter drugs?

## Prescription drugs:

- Prescribed by a doctor
- Bought at a pharmacy
- Intended to be used by one person

## OTC drugs:

- Do not require a doctor's prescription
- Bought off-the-shelf at a variety of stores
- Intended to be used by many people

# OTC

- Self Medication
- Off-the-Shelf
- For general public use

# Rx

- FDA Regulated
- Drugs
- Potential side-effects

- Doctor prescribes
- Pharmacy
- Prescribed use for 1 person

# Generic Drugs

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Many over-the-counter and prescription drugs come in generic form.

**Generic** drugs are identical to Brand Name drugs in most ways.

# Generic Drugs v. Brand Name Drugs

## Brand Name

- Patented
- Sold exclusively by the company that controls the patent



## Generic

- Patent life on Brand Name drug is expired
- Contains the same active ingredient, the same amount of active ingredient and the same dose as Brand name

# Generic drugs may differ from brand name drugs by

- Color
- Shape
- Taste
- Inactive ingredients
- Packaging



# Other concerns about Rx and OTC medicines

A few other things you should know...



# Overdose

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Many OTC products contain the same active ingredient.

Overdoses can cause damage to vital organs.

Drugs can cause serious illness or even be fatal if taken incorrectly.

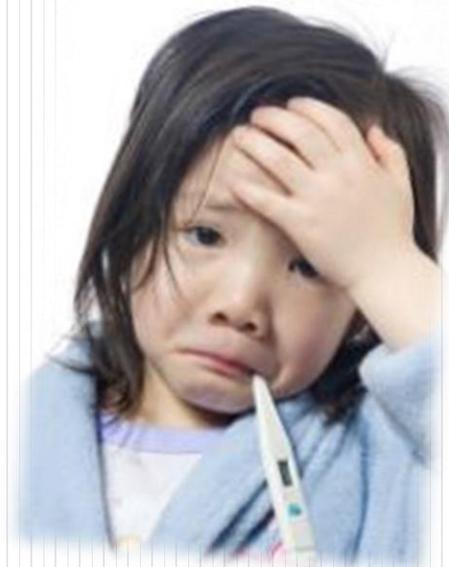
# Alcohol Warning

The FDA warns that “people who use alcohol regularly may be at increased risk for **toxicity**.”



# Children are not small adults

When giving children medicine use their weight as a guide and use the dose measuring tool included with the medication.



# Drug Interaction

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Other medicines, supplements, medical conditions, and foods affect the way drugs work in your body.

# Driving under the influence of drugs-DUID

Prescription and OTCs can impair your ability to operate a motor vehicle.

**DUID** laws do not exclude legal Rx and OTC medicines.



# Some final advice from the Food and Drug Administration

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Before using any medicine, think **SAFER**:

- **S**peak up
- **A**sk questions
- **F**ind the facts
- **E**valuate your choices
- **R**ead the label

# About LifeSmarts

[www.LifeSmarts.org](http://www.LifeSmarts.org)

LifeSmarts is the nation's premier consumer education program teaching teens and tweens important real-life information.

LifeSmarts:

- Hosts online and live competitions
- Provides free teaching resources
- Offers many opportunities for students including teamwork, leadership, and community service
- Is a scholarship program

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