

LifeSmarts U: Health & Safety

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LifeSmarts

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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**

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.





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

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

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

- Doctor prescribes
- Pharmacy
- Prescribed use for 1 person

- FDA Regulated
- Drugs
- Potential side-effects

Generic Drugs

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

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.

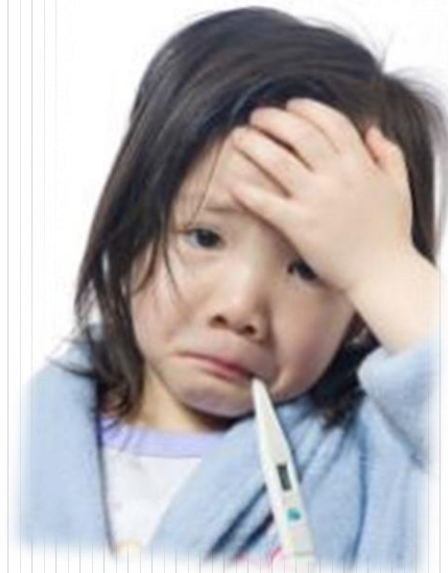
Alcohol Warning

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

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

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

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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