



Gut Check: Know Your Medicine

Frequently Asked Questions

What are over-the-counter medicines?

Over-the-counter, or OTC, medicines, are medicines that can be purchased in many stores, without a prescription from a doctor.

What are over-the-counter pain medicines used for?

OTC pain medicines have an active ingredient that helps relieve your pain. The two main types of oral OTC pain medicines are acetaminophen (commonly found in medicine brands such as Tylenol® or Dayquil®,) and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, also known as NSAIDs (such as aspirin, naproxen, and ibuprofen, which are commonly found in medicine brands such as Advil®, Aleve® and Excedrin®) which can be found in hundreds of prescription and OTC products. You can find out which type of active ingredient is in your OTC medicine by reading the label on the package.

OTC pain medicines can help relieve minor pains due to:

- Minor arthritis pain.
- Backache.
- Common cold.
- Fever.
- Headache.
- Muscle ache.
- Premenstrual and menstrual cramps.
- Toothache.

Why is it important to know what's in your over-the-counter pain medicine?

Many people think that OTC pain medicine is safer than prescription medicine, but the truth is that it can be harmful if you don't take it the right way. The Drug Facts label found on all OTC pain medicine packages have information to help keep you safe. Any medicine can cause harm if you take more than you should (overdose).

Overdose can put you at risk for gut health problems.

Keep in mind:

- Many OTC *and* prescription medicines have the same ingredients. Taking more than one product at a time — even for different health issues — can result in overdose.
- Taking more than the recommended dose will not make you feel better faster and can result in overdose.
- When taking more than one medicine, be sure to know the type of each medication's active ingredients, so you don't take too much.

What is over-the-counter pain medicine overdose?

Overdose is when a person takes too much medicine. An overdose can result in a bad reaction or other serious health consequences. This can happen when:

- You take more than a single dose.
- You take more medicine too soon after a dose.
- You take more than the amount you should per day.
- You take more than one product with the same kind of active ingredient at the same time.

Overdose can lead to serious gut health problems, such as:

- Stomach bleeding.
- Stomach ulcers.
- Harm to the liver.
- Liver failure.
- Death.

How am I supposed to know what to take?

There are many choices when it comes to OTC pain medicines. When you are at a store that sells OTC medicine, be sure to set aside enough time to read all labels to make a safe choice for you and your family.

A few tips:

- Talk to the pharmacist if you have any questions before you buy something.
- Choose a product that works for your current health situation, age and medical history. Something that worked for you in the past may no longer be the right choice for you now.
- Keep in mind the type of active ingredients in other medicines you also take and only take one product at a time that contains acetaminophen or an NSAID.
- Speak with a doctor or health-care professional if you have any questions.

More than 500 medicines have acetaminophen and more than 900 medicines are classified as NSAIDs. Be sure to read all of the labels to stay safe!

What is *Gut Check: Know Your Medicine*?

The *Gut Check: Know Your Medicine* campaign is an education campaign from the American Gastroenterological Association (AGA), with support provided by McNeil Consumer Healthcare, to support adults in actively learning about their medicines and to be a source for pain sufferers to understand the risks and be safe. Through this campaign, AGA seeks to cut the number of preventable health issues and even deaths that thousands of people suffer each year from taking too much medicine.