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Allergy medications: Know your options

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Allergy medications: Know your options

Several types of medications are used to treat allergy symptoms. Here's more information.

By [Mayo Clinic Staff](#)

Allergy medications are available as pills, liquids, inhalers, nasal sprays, eyedrops, skin creams and shots (injections). Some are available over-the-counter; others are available by prescription only. Here's a summary of the types of allergy medications and why they're used.

Antihistamines

Antihistamines block histamine, a symptom-causing chemical released by your immune system during an allergic reaction.

Pills and liquids

Oral antihistamines are available over-the-counter and by prescription. They ease a runny nose, itchy or watery eyes, hives, swelling, and other signs or symptoms of allergies. Because some of these drugs can make you feel drowsy and tired, take them with caution when you need to drive or do other activities that require alertness.

Antihistamines that tend to cause drowsiness include:

- Diphenhydramine
- Chlorpheniramine

These antihistamines are much less likely to cause drowsiness:

- Cetirizine (Zyrtec, Zyrtec Allergy)
- Desloratadine (Clarinex)
- Fexofenadine (Allegra, Allegra Allergy)
- Levocetirizine (Xyzal, Xyzal Allergy)
- Loratadine (Alavert, Claritin)

Nasal sprays

Antihistamine nasal sprays help relieve sneezing, itchy or runny nose, sinus congestion, and postnasal drip. Side effects of antihistamine nasal sprays might include a bitter taste, drowsiness or feeling tired. Prescription antihistamine nasal sprays include:

- Azelastine (Astelin, Astepro)
- Olopatadine (Patanase)

Eyedrops

Antihistamine eyedrops, available over-the-counter or by prescription, can ease itchy, red, swollen eyes. These drops might have a combination of antihistamines and other medicines.

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Side effects might include headache and dry eyes. If antihistamine drops sting or burn, try keeping them in the refrigerator or using refrigerated artificial-tear drops before you use them. Examples include:

- Ketotifen (Alaway, Zaditor)
- Olopatadine (Pataday, Patanol, Pazeo)
- Pheniramine and naphazoline (Visine, Opcon-A, others)

Decongestants

Decongestants are used for quick, temporary relief of nasal and sinus congestion. They can cause trouble sleeping, headache, increased blood pressure and irritability. They're not recommended for people with high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease, glaucoma or hyperthyroidism.

Pills and liquids

Oral decongestants relieve nasal and sinus congestion caused by hay fever (allergic rhinitis). Many decongestants, such as pseudoephedrine (Sudafed), are available over-the-counter.

A number of oral allergy medications contain a decongestant and an antihistamine. Examples include:

- Cetirizine and pseudoephedrine (Zyrtec-D 12 Hour)
- Desloratadine and pseudoephedrine (Clarinet-D)
- Fexofenadine and pseudoephedrine (Allegra-D)
- Loratadine and pseudoephedrine (Claritin-D)

Nasal sprays and drops

Nasal decongestant sprays and drops relieve nasal and sinus congestion if used only for a short time. Repeated use of these drugs for more than three consecutive days may result in a cycle where congestion recurs or gets worse. Examples include:

- Oxymetazoline (Afrin)
- Tetrahydrozoline (Tyline)

Corticosteroids

Corticosteroids relieve symptoms by suppressing allergy-related inflammation.

Nasal sprays

Corticosteroid sprays prevent and relieve stuffiness, sneezing and runny nose. Side effects can include an unpleasant taste, nasal irritation and nosebleeds. Examples include:

- Budesonide (Rhinocort)
- Fluticasone furoate (Flonase Sensimist)
- Fluticasone propionate (Flonase Allergy Relief)
- Mometasone (Nasonex)
- Triamcinolone (Nasacort Allergy 24 Hour)

For people who are bothered by the feeling of liquid running down their throats or the unpleasant taste of these sprays, there are two aerosol formulas:

- Beclomethasone (Qnasl)
- Ciclesonide (Zetonna)

Inhalers

Inhaled corticosteroids are often used daily as part of treatment for asthma caused or complicated by reactions to airborne allergy triggers (allergens). Side effects are generally minor and can include mouth and throat irritation and oral yeast infections.

Some inhalers combine corticosteroids with long-acting bronchodilators. Prescription inhalers include:

- Beclomethasone (Qvar Redihaler)
- Budesonide (Pulmicort Flexhaler)
- Ciclesonide (Alvesco)
- Fluticasone (Flovent)

- Mometasone (Asmanex Twisthaler)

Eyedrops

Corticosteroid eyedrops are used to relieve persistent itchy, red or watery eyes when other interventions aren't effective. A physician specializing in eye disorders (ophthalmologist) usually monitors the use of these drops because of the risk of problems, such as cataracts, glaucoma and infection. Examples include:

- Fluorometholone (Flarex, FML)
- Loteprednol (Alrex, Lotemax)
- Prednisolone (Omnipred, Pred Forte, others)

Pills and liquids

Oral corticosteroids are used to treat severe symptoms caused by all types of allergic reactions. Long-term use can cause cataracts, osteoporosis, muscle weakness, stomach ulcers, increased blood sugar (glucose) and delayed growth in children. Oral corticosteroids can also worsen high blood pressure.

Prescription oral corticosteroids include:

- Prednisolone (Prelone)
- Prednisone (Prednisone Intensol, Rayos)
- Methylprednisolone (Medrol)

Skin creams

Corticosteroid creams relieve allergic skin reactions such as itching, redness or scaling. Some low-potency corticosteroid creams are available without a prescription, but talk to your doctor before using these drugs for more than a few weeks.

Side effects can include skin discoloration and irritation. Long-term use, especially of stronger prescription corticosteroids, can cause thinning of the skin and abnormal hormone levels.

Examples include:

- Betamethasone (Dermabet, Diprolene, others)
- Desonide (Desonate, DesOwen)
- Hydrocortisone (Locoid, Micort-HC, others)
- Mometasone (Elocon)
- Triamcinolone

Mast cell stabilizers

Mast cell stabilizers block the release of chemicals in the immune system that contribute to allergic reactions. These drugs are generally safe but usually need to be used for several days to produce the full effect. They're usually used when antihistamines are not working or not well-tolerated.

Nasal spray

Over-the-counter nasal sprays include cromolyn (Nasalcrom).

Eyedrops

Prescription eyedrops include the following:

- Cromolyn (Crolom)
- Lodoxamide (Alomide)
- Nedocromil (Alocril)

Leukotriene inhibitors

A leukotriene inhibitor is a prescription medication that blocks symptom-causing chemicals called leukotrienes. This oral medication relieves allergy signs and symptoms including nasal congestion, runny nose and sneezing. Only one type of this drug, montelukast (Singulair), is approved for treating hay fever.

In some people, leukotriene inhibitors can cause psychological symptoms such as anxiety, depression, strange dreams, trouble sleeping, and suicidal thinking or behavior.

Allergen immunotherapy

Immunotherapy is carefully timed and gradually increased exposure to allergens, particularly those that are difficult to avoid, such as pollens, dust mites and molds. The goal is to train the body's immune system not to react to these allergens.

Immunotherapy might be used when other treatments aren't effective or tolerated. It is also helpful in reducing asthma symptoms in some patients.

Shots

Immunotherapy may be given as a series of injections, usually one or two times a week. The dose may be increased weekly or every two weeks based on the patient's tolerance. Injections of the maximum tolerated dose may then be given every two to four weeks year round.

Side effects might include irritation at the injection site and allergy symptoms such as sneezing, congestion or hives. Rarely, allergy shots can cause anaphylaxis, a sudden life-threatening reaction that causes swelling in the throat, difficulty breathing, and other signs and symptoms.

Sublingual immunotherapy (SLIT)

With this type of immunotherapy, you place an allergen-based tablet under your tongue (sublingual) and allow it to be absorbed. This treatment has been shown to reduce runny nose, congestion, eye irritation and other symptoms associated with hay fever. It also improves asthma symptoms.

One SLIT tablet contains dust mites (Odactra). Several SLIT tablets contain extracts from pollens of different types of grass, including the following:

- Short ragweed (Ragwitek)
- Sweet vernal, orchard, perennial rye, Timothy and Kentucky blue grass (Oralair)
- Timothy grass (Grastek)

Biological medications

Some medications target a specific reaction in the immune system and try to prevent it from happening. These medications are given as injections. They include dupilumab (Dupixent) to treat allergic skin reactions and omalizumab (Xolair) to treat asthma or hives when other medications don't help.

Side effects of biological medications may include redness, itchiness, or irritation of the eyes and irritation at the injection site.

Emergency epinephrine shots

Epinephrine shots are used to treat anaphylaxis, a sudden, life-threatening reaction. The drug is administered with a self-injecting syringe and needle device (auto-injector). You might need to carry two auto-injectors if there's a chance you could have a severe allergic reaction to a certain food, such as peanuts, or if you're allergic to bee or wasp venom.

A second injection is sometimes needed. As a result, it's important to call 911 or get immediate emergency medical care.

A health care professional will train you on how to use an epinephrine auto-injector. It's important to get the type that your doctor prescribes, as the method for injection may differ slightly for each brand. Also, be sure to replace your emergency epinephrine before the expiration date.

Examples of these medications include:

- Adrenaclick
- Auvi-Q
- EpiPen
- EpiPen Jr

Get your doctor's advice

Work with your doctor to choose the most effective allergy medications and avoid problems. Even over-the-counter allergy medications have side effects, and some allergy medications can cause problems when combined with other medications.

It's especially important to talk to your doctor about taking allergy medications in the following circumstances:

- **You're pregnant or breast-feeding.**
- **You have a chronic health condition**, such as diabetes, glaucoma, osteoporosis or high blood pressure.
- **You're taking other medications**, including herbal supplements.
- **You're treating allergies in a child.** Children need different doses of medication or different medications from adults.
- **You're treating allergies in an older adult.** Some allergy medications can cause confusion, urinary tract symptoms or other side effects in older adults.
- **You're already taking an allergy medication that isn't working.** Bring the medication with you in its original bottle or package when you see your doctor.

Keep track of your symptoms, when you use your medications and how much you use. This will help your doctor figure out what works best. You might need to try a few medications to determine which are most effective and have the least bothersome side effects for you.

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Possible Alternatives to Discuss with your Healthcare Provider

Possible Alternatives to Discuss with your Healthcare Provider

Medication Class/Examples

NOTE: This is only a partial list of medications. Medications listed in parentheses are examples of brand names of the generic medications listed.

Medication Class/Examples

First Generation Antihistamines
(used for allergies)

- chlorpheniramine (AllerChlor)
- diphenhydramine (Benadryl)

Possible Alternatives to Discuss with your Healthcare Provider

- saline nasal rinse
- steroid nasal sprays such as fluticasone (Flonase)
- Allergy products such as:
 - cetirizine (Zyrtec)
 - fexofenadine (Allegra)
 - loratadine (Claritin)

Medication Class/Examples

Tricyclic Antidepressants
used for depression

- amitriptyline (Elavil)
- imipramine (Tofranil)



Possible Alternatives to Discuss with your Healthcare Provider	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - citalopram (Celexa) - sertraline (Zoloft) ▪ bupropion (historically known as Wellbutrin)
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Medication Class/Examples	Barbiturates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ phenobarbital ▪ other drugs ending in “barbital”
Possible Alternatives to Discuss with your Healthcare Provider	For epilepsy, anticonvulsants such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ lamotrigine (Lamictal) ▪ levetiracetam (Keppra)

Medication Class/Examples	Sleeping Aids <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ zolpidem (Ambien) ▪ zaleplon (Sonata) ▪ eszopiclone (Lunesta)
Possible Alternatives to Discuss with your Healthcare Provider	Ask your healthcare provider about other strategies to improve your sleep (without medications).

Medication Class/Examples	<p>Pain Medication (NSAIDs)</p> <p>People with chronic kidney disease or chronic renal failure should avoid all non-aspirin, nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medications (NSAIDs).</p>
Possible Alternatives to Discuss with your Healthcare Provider	<p>These alternatives listed are for moderate pain:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ acetaminophen (Tylenol) ▪ topical capsaicin products ▪ lidocaine patches ▪ serotonin–norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors (SNRIs) such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - duloxetine (Cymbalta) - venlafaxine (Effexor)

Medication Class/Examples	<p>Benzodiazepines (often used to treat anxiety and sleep disorders as well as other conditions)</p> <p>People with a history of falls should avoid benzodiazepines, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ alprazolam (Xanax) ▪ lorazepam (Ativan) ▪ diazepam (Valium)
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Possible Alternatives to Discuss with your Healthcare Provider	<p>For moderate or severe anxiety:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - citalopram (Celexa) - sertraline (Zoloft) <p>For sleep or anxiety:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ask your healthcare provider about anxiety management techniques and other strategies to improve sleep.
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Medication Class/Examples	<p>Hormone Therapy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Estrogen pills and patches
Possible Alternatives to Discuss with your Healthcare Provider	<p>For hot flashes and night sweats:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ gabapentin (Neurontin) ▪ serotonin–norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors (SNRIs) ▪ selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) <p>For vaginal dryness:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ topical estrogen creams

Medication Class/Examples	Muscle Relaxants <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ cyclobenzaprine (Flexeril or Amrix or Fexmid) ▪ methocarbamol (Robaxin)
Possible Alternatives to Discuss with your Healthcare Provider	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ acetaminophen ▪ NSAID pain medications such as ibuprofen or naproxen (Short-term use only. Be cautious about long-term use; avoid if you have heart failure or kidney disease.) ▪ Stretching, heating and/or cooling, and physical therapy or therapeutic massage

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Contact Us

Health In Aging

40 Fulton St., Suite 809
New York, NY 10038

Phone: 212.308.1414

[Email Us](#)

Essential Drug List

Medication alternatives



The Essential Drug List is a list of prescription medications approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). We've reviewed these drugs through our Pharmacy and Therapeutics (P&T) Process, which considers a drug's:

- Effectiveness
- Safety
- Similarity to other drugs within a therapeutic class
- Affordability

The Essential Drug List is a closed formulary, which means that only the prescription drugs on the list will be covered by the plan. Drugs that aren't covered have cost-effective, high-quality alternatives available. There may be a brand alternative, a generic equivalent or an over-the-counter (OTC) option. Brand-name drugs with a generic equivalent available aren't covered on the Essential Drug List.

Some common drugs that aren't on the Essential Drug List are shown below. Other preferred alternatives may also be available. Please note, exclusions and limitations may apply. For details about what's covered and what's not, it's best to check the Certificate/Evidence of Coverage or Summary Plan Description (SPD).

To view and search the complete Essential Drug List, members should log in at **anthem.com** and choose **Prescription Benefits**. Information on dosage/strength options and any restrictions such as quantity limits, prior approval or step therapy requirements is available. Members can also call Member Services at the number on their ID card.

What if a medication isn't on the Essential Drug List?

There may be times when a member's drug isn't on the Essential Drug List. If the covered alternative options aren't right for a member, their doctor can submit a request for an exception. This process, called prior authorization, requires the doctor to call the Member Services number on the member's ID card or go to **anthem.com/pharmacyinformation** to download and submit the prior authorization form.

Doctors can also submit prior authorizations electronically, which requires less processing time and possible real-time approval so members can fill their prescriptions right away.

For the most up-to-date information, members should log in at [anthem.com](https://www.anthem.com) and choose Prescription Benefits.

Drug class	Medications not on the Essential Drug List	Preferred alternatives
Acne – antibiotic	Acticlate, Doryx, Oracea (brand and generic), Seysara, Solodyn, Vibramycin, Ximino ER	Generic minocycline and doxycycline products
Allergic Reaction Treatment	Adrenaclick, Auvi-Q, EpiPen, EpiPen JR	epinephrine auto-injector (Authorized generic EpiPen from Mylan)
Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)	Focalin XR	Adderall XR, dexamethylphenidate ER, Vyvanse
Allergies – antihistamines	Karbinal ER, levocetirizine	desloratadine, Zyrtec solution OTC*, cetirizine* fexofenadine*, loratadine*
Blood modifiers	Epogen, Mircera	Procrit, Aranesp, Retacrit
Cholesterol	Altoprev, Crestor, Livalo	atorvastatin, ezetimibe, ezetimibe-simvastatin, lovastatin, pravastatin, rosuvastatin, simvastatin
Diabetes – insulin	Admelog, Basaglar, Afrezza, Apidra, Fiasp, Novolin, Novolog, Tresiba	Humulin, Humalog, Insulin Lispro, Lantus, Levemir, Toujeo
Diabetes – biguanides	Fortamet (brand and generic), Glumetza (brand and generic), Riomet	metformin, metformin ER (generic Glucophage XR)
Diabetes – DPP4 combo	Kazano, Kombiglyze XR	Janumet/XR, Jentadueto
Diabetes – DPP4s	Nesina, Onglyza	Tradjenta, Januvia
Diabetes – GLP1s	Tanzeum	Bydureon, Byetta, Ozempic, Trulicity, Victoza
Diabetes – SGLT2/combos	Glyxambi, Invokana, Invokamet/XR, Qtern, Segluromet, Steglatrol, Steglujan	Farxiga, Jardiance, Synjardy/XR, Xigduo XR
Diabetes – test strips	All except OneTouch & Accu-chek	OneTouch & Accu-chek
Erectile dysfunction	Cialis, Levitra, Staxyn, Stendra, Viagra	sildenafil citrate (generic Viagra), tadalafil (generic Cialis)

Drug class	Medications not on the Essential Drug List	Preferred alternatives
Gastrointestinal – PPIs	Aciphex (brand and generic), Nexium (brand and generic), Prevacid/ODT (brand and generic), Protonix	Nexium*, omeprazole, pantoprazole
Growth hormone	Genotropin, Norditropin, Omnitrope, Saizen, Zomacton	Humatrope, Nutropin AQ
Hepatitis C – genotype 1	Daklinza, Epclusa, Harvoni, Pegasys, Sovaldi, Viekira Pak/XR, Olysio	Mavyret
Immunologicals	Actemra, Cimzia, Ilumya, Kevzara, Orencia	Cosentyx, Enbrel, Humira, Rinvoq, Simponi, Stelara, Skyrizi, Tremfya
Infliximab Products	Inflectra, Renflexis	Remicade
Migraines	Frova, Relpax	rizatriptan, sumatriptan, zolmitriptan
Multiple sclerosis	Tysabri	Avonex, Betaseron, Copaxone, Extavia, Gilenya, glatiramer, glatopa, Plegridy, Rebif, Tecfidera
Nasal steroids & combos	Beconase AQ, flunisolide, fluticasone, Nasonex, Omnaris, Qnasl/children, Xhance, Zetonna	OTC nasal steroids such as Flonase Allergy*, Nasacort Allergy*, Rhinocort Allergy*
Respiratory – anti-cholinergics	Incruse Ellipta, Tudorza Pressair	Spiriva
Respiratory – anti-inflammatory	Aerospan, Alvesco, Armonair, Asmanex, Pulmicort	Arnuity Ellipta, Flovent, Qvar Redihaler
Respiratory – ICS/LABAs	Advair Diskus, Airduo (brand and generic)	Advair HFA, Breo Ellipta, Dulera, fluticasone-salmeterol (generic Advair Diskus), Symbicort, wixela
Respiratory – LABAs	Arcapta, Brovana, Striverdi	Perforomist, Serevent
Respiratory – LAMA/LABAs	Bevespi, Utibron	Anoro Ellipta, Combivent, Stiolto
Respiratory – SABAs	ProAir Digihaler, Proventil HFA, Ventolin HFA, Xopenex HFA (brand and generic)	albuterol HFA, ProAir HFA, ProAir Respiclick
Sedative/hypnotics	Intermezzo, Rozerem, zolpidem ER	eszopiclone, zolpidem
Testosterone – topical	Androgel 1%, 1.62%, Fortesta, Natesto, Testim, Vogelxo	testosterone gel, gel pump, topical solution
Thyroid	Armour Thyroid, Synthroid, Tirosint	levothyroxine

*OTC - Available over the counter without a prescription required

Common medications not on the Essential Drug List (in alphabetical order)

Actemra	Beconase AQ	Genotropin	Natesto	Qnasl/children	Testim
Acticlate	Bevespi	Glumetza (brand and generic)	Nesina	Qtern	Tirosint
Aciphex (brand and generic)	Brovana	Glyxambi	Nexium (brand and generic)	Relpax	Tremfya
Admelog	Cialis	Harvoni	Norditropin	Renflexis	Tresiba
Adrenaclick	Cimzia	Ilumya	Novolin	Riomet	Tudorza Pressair
Advair Diskus	Crestor	Incruse Ellipta	Novolog	Rozerem	Tysabri
Aerospan	Daklinza	Inflectra	Olysio	Saizen	Utibron
Afrezza	Diabetic test strips – all except OneTouch & Accu-chek	Intermezzo	Omnaris	Segluromet	Ventolin HFA
Airduo (brand and generic)	Doryx	Invokamet/XR	Omnitrope	Seysara	Viagra
Altoprev	Epclusa	Invokana	Onglyza	Skyrizi	Vibramycin
Alvesco	EpiPen	Karbinal ER	Oracea (brand and generic)	Solodyn	Viekira Pak/XR
Androgel 1%, 1.62%	EpiPen JR	Kazano	Orencia	Sovaldi	Vogelxo
Apidra	Epogen	Kevzara	Otezla	Staxyn	Xhance
Arcapta	Fiasp	Kombiglyze XR	Pegasys	Steglatro	Ximino ER
Armonair	fluticasone nasal spray	lansoprazole/ODT	Prevacid/ODT (brand and generic)	Steglujan	Xopenex HFA (brand and generic)
Armour Thyroid	Focalin XR	Levitra	ProAir Digihaler	Stendra	zolpidem ER
Asmanex	Fortamet (brand and generic)	levocetirizine	Protonix	Striverdi	Zomacton
Auvi-Q	Fortesta	Livalo	Proventil HFA	Synthroid	
Basaglar	Frova	Mircera	Pulmicort	Tanzeum	

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DRUG

INTERACTIONS:

WHAT YOU

SHOULD KNOW



Council on Family Health

Drug Interactions

There are more opportunities today than ever before to learn about your health and to take better care of yourself. It is also more important than ever to know about the medicines you take. If you take several different medicines, see more than one doctor or have certain health conditions, you and your doctors need to be aware of all the medicines you take to avoid potential problems, such as drug interactions.

Drug interactions may make your drug less effective, cause unexpected side effects or increase the action of a particular drug. Some drug interactions can even be harmful to you. Reading the label every time you use a nonprescription or prescription drug and taking the time to learn about drug interactions may be critical to your health. You can reduce the risk of potentially harmful drug interactions and side effects with a little bit of knowledge and common sense.

Drug interactions fall into three broad categories:

- **Drug-drug interactions** occur when two or more drugs react with each other. This drug-drug interaction may cause you to experience an unexpected side effect. For example, mixing a drug you take to help you sleep (a sedative) and a drug you take for allergies (an antihistamine) can slow your reactions and make driving a car or operating machinery dangerous.
- **Drug-food/beverage interactions** result from drugs reacting with foods or beverages. For example, mixing alcohol with some drugs may cause you to feel tired or slow your reactions.
- **Drug-condition interactions** may occur when an existing medical condition makes certain drugs potentially harmful. For example, if you have high blood pressure you could experience an unwanted reaction if you take a nasal decongestant.

Drug Interactions and Over-the-Counter Medicines

Over-the-counter (OTC) drug labels contain information about ingredients, uses, warnings and directions that is important to read and understand. The label also includes important information about possible

drug interactions. Further, drug labels may change as new information becomes known. That's why it's especially important to read the label every time you use a drug.

The "Active Ingredients" and "Purpose" sections list:

- the name and amount of each active ingredient
- the purpose of each active ingredient

The "Uses" section of the label:

- tells you what the drug is used for
- helps you find the best drug for your specific symptoms

The "Warnings" section of the label provides important drug interaction and precaution information such as:

- when to talk to a doctor or pharmacist before use
- the medical conditions that may make the drug less effective or not safe
- under what circumstances the drug should not be used
- when to stop taking the drug

The "Directions" section of the label tells you:

- the length of time and the amount of the product that you may safely use
- any special instructions on how to use the product

The "Other Information" section of the label tells you:

- required information about certain ingredients, such as sodium content, for people with dietary restrictions or allergies

The "Inactive Ingredients" section of the label tells you:

- the name of each inactive ingredient (such as colorings, binders, etc.)

The "Questions?" or "Questions or Comments?" section of the label (if included):

- provides telephone numbers of a source to answer questions about the product

Learning More About Drug Interactions

Talk to your doctor or pharmacist about the drugs you take. When your doctor prescribes a new drug, discuss all OTC and prescription drugs, dietary supplements, vitamins, botanicals, minerals and herbals you take, as well as the foods you eat. Ask your pharmacist for the

package insert for each prescription drug you take. The package insert provides more information about potential drug interactions.

Before taking a drug, ask your doctor or pharmacist the following questions:

- Can I take it with other drugs?
- Should I avoid certain foods, beverages or other products?
- What are possible drug interaction signs I should know about?
- How will the drug work in my body?
- Is there more information available about the drug or my condition (on the Internet or in health and medical literature)?

Know how to take drugs safely and responsibly. Remember, the drug label will tell you:

- what the drug is used for
- how to take the drug
- how to reduce the risk of drug interactions and unwanted side effects

If you still have questions after reading the drug product label, ask your doctor or pharmacist for more information.

Remember that different OTC drugs may contain the same active ingredient. If you are taking more than one OTC drug, pay attention to the active ingredients used in the products to avoid taking too much of a particular ingredient. Under certain circumstances — such as if you are pregnant or breast-feeding — you should talk to your doctor before you take any medicine. Also, make sure to know what ingredients are contained in the medicines you take to avoid possible allergic reactions.

The following are examples of drug interaction warnings that you may see on certain OTC drug products. These examples do not include all of the warnings for the listed types of products and should not take the place of reading the actual product label.

Category**Drug Interaction Information**

Acid Reducers

H2 Receptor Antagonists

(drugs that prevent or relieve heartburn associated with acid indigestion and sour stomach)

For products containing cimetidine, ask a doctor or pharmacist before use if you are:

- taking theophylline (oral asthma drug), warfarin (blood thinning drug) or phenytoin (seizure drug)

Antacids

(drugs for relief of acid indigestion, heartburn and/or sour stomach)

Ask a doctor or pharmacist before use if you are:

- allergic to milk or milk products if the product contains more than 5 grams lactose in a maximum daily dose
- taking a prescription drug

Ask a doctor before use if you have:

- kidney disease
-

Category

Drug Interaction Information

Antiemetics

(drugs for prevention or treatment of nausea, vomiting or dizziness associated with motion sickness)

Ask a doctor or pharmacist before use if you are:

- taking sedatives or tranquilizers

Ask a doctor before use if you have:

- a breathing problem, such as emphysema or chronic bronchitis
- glaucoma
- difficulty in urination due to an enlarged prostate gland

When using this product:

- avoid alcoholic beverages
-

Antihistamines

(drugs that temporarily relieve runny nose or reduce sneezing, itching of the nose or throat, and itchy watery eyes due to hay fever or other upper respiratory problems)

Ask a doctor or pharmacist before use if you are taking:

- sedatives or tranquilizers
- a prescription drug for high blood pressure or depression

Ask a doctor before use if you have:

- glaucoma or difficulty in urination due to an enlarged prostate gland
- breathing problems, such as emphysema, chronic bronchitis or asthma

When using this product:

- alcohol, sedatives and tranquilizers may increase drowsiness
- avoid alcoholic beverages

Category

Drug Interaction Information

Antitussives

Cough Medicine
(drugs that temporarily reduce cough due to minor throat and bronchial irritation as may occur with a cold)

Ask a doctor or pharmacist before use if you are:

- taking sedatives or tranquilizers

Ask a doctor before use if you have:

- glaucoma or difficulty in urination due to an enlarged prostate gland

Bronchodilators

(drugs for the temporary relief of shortness of breath, tightness of chest and wheezing due to bronchial asthma)

Ask a doctor before use if you:

- have heart disease, high blood pressure, thyroid disease, diabetes or difficulty in urination due to an enlarged prostate gland
- have ever been hospitalized for asthma or are taking a prescription drug for asthma

Laxatives

(drugs for the temporary relief of constipation)

Ask a doctor before use if you have:

- kidney disease and the laxative contains phosphates, potassium or magnesium
- stomach pain, nausea or vomiting

Nasal

Decongestants

(drugs for the temporary relief of nasal congestion due to a cold, hay fever or other upper respiratory allergies)

Ask a doctor before use if you:

- have heart disease, high blood pressure, thyroid disease, diabetes or difficulty in urination due to an enlarged prostate gland

Category

Drug Interaction Information

Nicotine Replacement Products
(drugs that reduce withdrawal symptoms associated with quitting smoking, including nicotine craving)

- Ask a doctor before use if you:**
- have high blood pressure not controlled by medication
 - have heart disease or have had a recent heart attack or irregular heartbeat since nicotine can increase your heart rate
- Ask a doctor or pharmacist before use if you are:**
- taking a prescription drug for depression or asthma (your dose may need to be adjusted)
 - using a prescription non-nicotine stop-smoking drug
- Do not use:**
- if you continue to smoke, chew tobacco, use snuff or use other nicotine-containing products

Nighttime Sleep Aids
(drugs for relief of occasional sleeplessness)

- Ask a doctor or pharmacist before use if you are:**
- taking sedatives or tranquilizers
- Ask a doctor before use if you have:**
- a breathing problem such as emphysema or chronic bronchitis
 - glaucoma
 - difficulty in urination due to an enlarged prostate gland
- When using this product:**
- avoid alcoholic beverages

Category

Drug Interaction Information

Pain Relievers
(drugs for the temporary relief of minor body aches, pains and headaches)

Ask a doctor before taking if you:

- consume three or more alcohol-containing drinks per day

(The following ingredients are found in different OTC pain relievers: acetaminophen, aspirin, ibuprofen, ketoprofen, magnesium salicylate and naproxen. It is important to read the label of pain reliever products to learn about different drug interaction warnings for each ingredient.)

Stimulants
(drugs that help restore mental alertness or wakefulness during fatigue or drowsiness)

When using this product:

- limit the use of foods, beverages and other drugs that have caffeine – too much caffeine can cause nervousness, irritability, sleeplessness and occasional rapid heartbeat
- be aware that the recommended dose of this product contains about as much caffeine as a cup of coffee

Topical Acne Products
(drugs for the treatment of acne)

When using this product:

- increased dryness or irritation of the skin may occur immediately following use of this product or if you are using other topical acne drugs at the same time. If this occurs, only one drug should be used unless directed by your doctor

This information is brought to you by the
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