

How to read drug labels

You should find a label in the format below on all packages of prescription drugs obtained from your pharmacy. The sample format below should help you decipher what the various sections of the label indicate.

See the next page for a sample label that you will see on all OTC (Over the Counter) drugs; drugs that you can buy without requiring a prescription.

Prescription drug label:

The diagram shows a sample prescription drug label with several callout boxes pointing to specific information:

- Pharmacy name and address:** Points to the pharmacy logo and address: **Local Pharmacy**, 123 MAIN STREET, ANYTOWN, USA 11111.
- Number used by the drugstore to identify this drug for your refills:** Points to the number **NO 0060023-08291**.
- Person who gets this drug:** Points to the patient's name **JANE SMITH** and address **456 MAIN STREET ANYTOWN, US 11111**.
- Instructions about how often and when to take this drug:** Points to the instruction **TAKE ONE CAPSULE BY MOUTH THREE TIMES DAILY FOR 10 DAYS UNTIL ALL TAKEN**.
- Name of drug and strength of drug:** Points to **AMOXICILLIN 500MG CAPSULES**.
- Number of refills before certain date:** Points to **NO REFILLS - DR. AUTHORIZATION REQUIRED**.
- Doctor's name:** Points to **DR C. JONES**.
- Drugstore phone number:** Points to **(800) 555-5555**.
- Prescription fill date:** Points to **DATE 06/23/09**.
- Don't use this drug past this date:** Points to the expiration date **USE BEFORE 06/23/12**.

Other details on the label include a barcode on the right, a small 'Rx ONLY' label at the bottom left, and the quantity **QTY MRG** above the refills section.

OTC (Over the Counter) drug label:

Drug Facts							
Therapeutic substance in drug	<table><tr><td>Active ingredient (in each tablet)</td><td>Purpose</td></tr><tr><td>Chlorpheniramine maleate 2 mg</td><td>Antihistamine</td></tr></table>	Active ingredient (in each tablet)	Purpose	Chlorpheniramine maleate 2 mg	Antihistamine	Product type	
Active ingredient (in each tablet)	Purpose						
Chlorpheniramine maleate 2 mg	Antihistamine						
	Uses temporarily relieves these symptoms due to hay fever or other upper respiratory allergies: ■ sneezing ■ runny nose ■ itchy, watery eyes ■ itchy throat	Symptoms or diseases the drug treats					
When not to use this drug, when to stop taking it, when to see a doctor, and possible side effects	Warnings Ask a doctor before use if you have ■ glaucoma ■ a breathing problem such as emphysema or chronic bronchitis ■ trouble urinating due to an enlarged prostate gland Ask a doctor or pharmacist before use if you are taking tranquilizers or sedatives						
	When using this product ■ You may get drowsy ■ Avoid alcoholic drinks ■ Alcohol, sedatives, and tranquilizers may increase drowsiness ■ Be careful when driving a motor vehicle or operating machinery ■ Excitability may occur, especially in children						
	If pregnant or breastfeeding, ask a health professional before use. Keep out of reach of children. In case of overdose, get medical help or contact a Poison Control Center right away.						
	Directions <table><tr><td>Adults and children 12 years and over</td><td>Take 2 tablets every 4 to 6 hours; not more than 12 tablets in 24 hours</td></tr><tr><td>Children 6 years to under 12 years</td><td>Take 1 tablet every 4 to 6 hours; not more than 6 tablets in 24 hours</td></tr><tr><td>Children under 6 years</td><td>Ask a doctor</td></tr></table>	Adults and children 12 years and over	Take 2 tablets every 4 to 6 hours; not more than 12 tablets in 24 hours	Children 6 years to under 12 years	Take 1 tablet every 4 to 6 hours; not more than 6 tablets in 24 hours	Children under 6 years	Ask a doctor
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Children 6 years to under 12 years	Take 1 tablet every 4 to 6 hours; not more than 6 tablets in 24 hours						
Children under 6 years	Ask a doctor						
More information on how to store the drug	Other information Store at 20-25° C (68-77° F) ■ Protect from excessive moisture						
	Inactive ingredients D&C yellow no. 10, lactose, magnesium stearate, microcrystalline cellulose, pregelatinized starch	Other things in the drug, such as colors or flavorings					

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services