

OVER-THE-COUNTER MEDICATIONS FOR COLDS AND COUGH



DECONGESTANTS ANTIHISTAMINES ANTITUSSIVES EXPECTORANTS ANALGESICS



Decongestants – these meds help to decrease swelling of the nasal passages (de-con-gest) due to the action of adrenergic agonists & active ingredients of pseudoephedrine or phenylephrine. They can be taken by mouth or sprayed into the nose. Common ones are Sudafed, Neo-Synephrine, Fluticasone, and Afrin.

ANTIHISTAMINES - THESE MEDS, TAKEN BY MOUTH OR SPRAYED INTO THE NOSE, HELP TO RELIEVE ITCHY, WATERY EYES & SNEEZING RUNNY NOSE BY BLOCKING HISTAMINE MADE BY ALLERGENS (ANTI-HIST-AMINE). ACTIVE INGREDIENTS ARE DIPHENHYDRAMINE, FEXOFENADINE, CHLORPHENIRAMINE, BROMPHENIRAMINE, AND LORATADINE...TO NAME JUST A FEW.

Antitussives active ingredients are dextromethorphan or diphenhydramine or benzonatate, which are used to alleviate a COUGH with a common cold. These meds are taken by mouth only. Caution is used for people when taking these OTC meds with an addiction disorder.

EXPECTORANTS

USE OF THESE MEDS DECREASES THE THICKNESS & AMOUNT OF SECRETIONS/MUCUS IN RESPIRATORY PASSAGES TO RESULT IN A PRODUCTIVE COUGH. TAKEN BY MOUTH ONLY. ACTIVE INGREDIENTS ARE AMMONIUM CHLORIDE AND IODIDE PRODUCTS. Robitussin Cough & Delsym & Mucinex are a few.



ANALGESICS FOR ACHES & PAINS

OTC meds for discomfort with cough & colds are Acetaminophen/Tylenol and Ibuprofen/Advil/Motrin/Naproxen (NSAIDs – non-steroidal anti-inflammatory) meds. These can be taken orally with expectorants, antitussives, antihistamines, or decongestants as recommended on the package containers.



HOW TO KNOW WHICH OTC MEDS ARE SAFE TO TAKE WITH OTHER OTC MEDS --

- + ALWAYS READ THE MEDICATION LABELS
- + FOLLOW THE INSTRUCTIONS ON THE LABELS CAREFULLY & THE DRUG FACTS THAT ARE PROVIDED
- + ASK THE PHARMACIST FOR HELP

WHEN SHOULD YOU STOP TAKING THE OTC MEDS FOR COUGH/COLD SYMPTOMS?

Symptoms usually last for 7-10 days and should decrease or be gone by then. If not, or you feel worse, stop taking them & contact your healthcare provider.

CONSULT WITH YOUR HEALTHCARE PROVIDER FOR APPROVED OTC REMEDIES IF YOU HAVE DIABETES, HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE, SEIZURE DISORDER, DEPRESSION, HEART DISEASE, OR A BREATHING CONDITION.



Smith, S. M., Schroeder, K., & Fahey, T. (2014). Over-the-counter (OTC) medications for acute cough in children and adults in community settings. The Cochrane database of systematic reviews, 2014(11), CD001831. <https://doi.org/10.1002/14651858.CD001831.pub5>

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