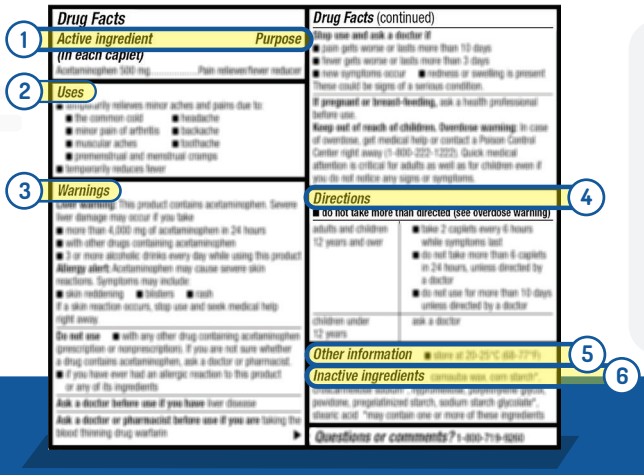
YOUR GUIDE TO OVER-THE-COUNTER MEDICATIONS

OVER-THE-COUNTER (OTC) MEDICATIONS ARE THOSE THAT ARE AVAILABLE WITHOUT A PRESCRIPTION.

HOW TO READ AN OTC LABEL



1. ACTIVE INGREDIENTS AND PURPOSE
2. USES
3. WARNINGS
4. DIRECTIONS
5. OTHER INFORMATION
6. INACTIVE INGREDIENTS

TYPES OF OTC PAIN RELIEVERS

Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs)

Generic names: Ibuprofen, naproxen, and diclofenac
Brand names: Advil, Motrin, Voltaren
Indications: General aches and pains, and pain associated with inflammation.
Formulations: Usually oral medications, but may also be topical (as with diclofenac). In oral form, it may be formulated in combination with other medications.

Salicylates

Generic names: Aspirin, methyl salicylate
Brand names: Bayer, Bengay Ultra Strength Cream
Indications: General aches and pains and pain associated with inflammation.
Formulations: Most commonly oral, but may also be topical. In topical form, it may be combined with counterirritants.

Acetaminophen

Generic names: Acetaminophen
Brand names: Tylenol, Paracetamol
Indications: General aches and pains. It does not treat inflammation.
Formulations: Oral medication only. May be formulated in combination with other medications.

Counterirritants

Generic names: Capsaicin, menthol, camphor
Brand names: Biofreeze, IcyHot, SalonPas
Indications: Localized pain or pain near the surface of the skin.
Formulations: These substances produce effects that help block the sensation of pain. They come in topical form, such as creams or patches.

SAFETY TIPS FOR USING OTCS:

- Tell your health care provider about every medication and supplement you are using, even natural or OTC products.
- Ask your provider or pharmacist about possible interactions between medications, supplements, and food.
- Alcohol interacts with many medications. Talk to your provider or pharmacist about the risks.
- Carefully read your medication label, especially the warnings and directions, before using it.

For more resources and information, visit:
uspainfoundation.org.

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