

# How to Provide Easy to Understand Information

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The State Board of Pharmacy created a two-page brochure designed to educate patients about common over-the-counter (OTC) pain medications, including acetaminophen. However, this brochure has a lot of text on it and may be difficult for people to read and understand. The local health department has asked you to design a new brochure that is easier for people to read and understand.

For this activity, you should work with a partner to do two things:

1. Use the checklist on page 2 to evaluate the brochure provided on pages 3 and 4. For questions you are not sure how to answer, you can leave those blank.
2. Design a completely new one page information sheet that could be handed out to pharmacy patients to help them understand the differences between these 3 medications: acetaminophen, ibuprofen, and aspirin.

You will want to think about how you can use images and diagrams and other design elements to create an easy to follow and interesting document. The checklist on page 2 provides some ideas that you might use to create an easy to understand information sheet (you do not have to use all of them).

## Checklist for Easy-to-Understand Print Materials

### Message Content

- Have you limited your messages to three to four messages per section?
- Have you taken out information that is “nice to know” but not necessary?
- Is the most important information at the beginning of the document?
- Is the most important information repeated at the end?
- Have you identified action steps or desired behaviors for your audience?

### Text Appearance

- Does your document have lots of white space? Are the margins at least ½ inch?
- Is the print large enough (at least 12 points)?
- Have you used bold, italics, and text boxes to highlight information?
- Have you avoided using all capital letters?
- Is text justified on the left only?
- Did you use columns with a line length of 40 to 50 characters of space?

### Visuals

- Is the cover attractive to you intended audience? Does it include your main message and show who the audience is?
- Are your visuals simple and instructive rather than decorative?
- Do visuals help explain the messages found in the text?
- Are your visuals placed near related text? Do they include captions?
- If you read only the captions, would you learn the main points?

### Layout and Design

- Is information presented in an order that is logical to your audience?
- Is information chunked, using headings and subheadings? Do lists include bullets?
- Have you eliminated as much jargon and technical language as possible?
- Is technical or scientific language explained?
- Have you used concrete nouns, an active voice, and short words and sentences?
- Is the style conversational?

Adapted from:

**Simply Put: A guide for creating easy-to-understand materials**  
[http://www.cdc.gov/healthliteracy/pdf/Simply\\_Put.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/healthliteracy/pdf/Simply_Put.pdf)

## State Board of Pharmacy Brochure (page 1)

### General Recommendations

*Each of these medications can be used effectively. Each of these medications can also be used incorrectly — leading to serious health problems.*

*Contact your health provider before you experience any symptoms that you feel are*

*unusual **and***

*FOLLOW ORDERS!*



*No matter which over-the-counter pain medicine is best for you, remember to:*

- ⇒ READ THE LABEL
- ⇒ FOLLOW THE DOSING INSTRUCTIONS
- ⇒ CHECK TO LEARN IF IT SHOULD BE TAKEN WITH OR WITHOUT FOOD
- ⇒ CHECK WITH YOUR HEALTH PROVIDER BEFORE TAKING ANY PRESCRIBED OR OVER-THE-COUNTER MEDICINES

Acetaminophen?

Aspirin?

Ibuprofen?



*Why? When? How?*

## State Board of Pharmacy Brochure (page 2)

### Over-the-counter (OTC) Pain Medicine Information

| Acetaminophen*   | Aspirin*   | Ibuprofen*  |
|--|--|---|
| <p>Uses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As a pain reliever</li> <li>As a fever reducer</li> </ul>  | <p>Uses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To relieve minor aches and pains.</li> <li>As an anti-inflammatory to reduce swelling and redness caused by infections, headaches or arthritis.</li> <li>To help prevent blood clots, strokes, heart disease, or heart attacks.</li> </ul>   | <p>Uses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As a nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) to treat fever, headaches, rheumatoid arthritis, osteoarthritis, muscle aches, menstrual cramps, or mild to moderate pain.</li> </ul>  |
| <p>Common brand (trade) names containing the pain medication:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tylenol</li> <li>Percocet</li> <li>Darvicet</li> <li>Excedrin PM</li> <li>Nyquil</li> <li>Thera-Flu</li> <li>Other prescription drugs (<i>read the label</i>)</li> </ul> <p><i>*Acetaminophen is often abbreviated as APAP on some medication and product labels.</i></p>                   | <p>Common brand (trade) names containing the OTC pain medication:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aspirin (<i>product made by many different companies</i>)</li> <li>Some medications (<i>read label</i>)</li> </ul>  | <p>Common brand (trade) names containing the OTC pain medication:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ibuprofen</li> <li>Aleve</li> <li>Motrin</li> </ul>  |
| <p>Precautions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Should be limited to: 10 days for pain relief, 3 days for fever, 2 days for severe sore throat</li> <li>Do NOT mix products containing APAP; Acute overdose can cause fatal liver damage.</li> <li>Do NOT continue using if experiencing flu-like symptoms, paleness of skin, weakness, sweating, loss of appetite, or nausea.</li> </ul> | <p>Precautions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adult doses are generally taken 4 times a day for fever or arthritis.</li> <li>Should not be given to children due to Reye Syndrome.</li> <li>Dosage depends on the condition or disease that is being treated.</li> <li>Some vitamins and medications may not mix with aspirin---Ask your doctor!!</li> <li>Do NOT continue using if experiencing ears ringing, hearing loss, black or bloody stools, skin rash, drowsiness, confusion, dizziness, or breathing issues.</li> </ul> | <p>Precautions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do NOT exceed recommended dosages.</li> <li>May cause dizziness or drowsiness, serious stomach ulcer or bleeding.</li> <li>Do NOT combine with aspirin.</li> <li>Can be prescribed as a prescription product.</li> <li>Do NOT continue using if you have had a severe allergic reaction, have recently had or will be having bypass heart surgery, or are in the last trimester of pregnancy.</li> </ul> |

*\*Check with doctor or pharmacist regarding any questions or concerns about the use or dose to take of these and other products.*