

Choosing and Using Medicines Safely

Members of the Lee family have a variety of health problems. There are many over-the-counter (OTC) medicines that the family members could use. Over-the-counter (OTC) medicines are legal drugs that can be purchased without a prescription from a doctor. However, when people use OTC medicines, they need to be careful to read and follow the instructions on the medicine label to be certain that they use them safely.

Refer to the handout, **How to Read an Over-the-Counter Drug Facts Label**, to help you understand how to find important information on a medicine

You will help members of the Lee family select appropriate over-the-counter medicines. For each family member, you will:

- Read the description of the family member's symptoms.
- Read the **active ingredients**, **purpose**, and **uses** sections of the Drug Facts label on the medicines. Select one of the medicines that could be used to treat the person's symptoms. Record the name of the medicine that you selected.
- Read the **directions** on the Drug Facts label. Record the recommended dose and information on how often the person should take that dose.
- Read the **warnings**, **other information**, and **inactive ingredients** sections on the Drug Facts label. Make notes to explain precautions the person should take to avoid harmful effects from this medicine.

Precautions are actions taken in advance to prevent something dangerous, unpleasant, or inconvenient from happening.

Bill Lee
Age: 40 years

Bill is a long-distance truck driver. He has allergy symptoms (watery eyes, runny nose, and sneezing) that started when the family adopted a dog. Bill has no other health problems.

1. Which medicine could be used to treat allergy symptoms? _____
 - What is the correct dose? _____
 - How often should this medicine be taken? _____
 - Take no more than _____ in a 24 hour period.

 2. Is it safe for Bill to use this medicine without consulting his doctor? Explain why or why not.

 3. List all of the precautions Bill should take to avoid harmful effects from this medicine.

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Mimi Lee
Age: 39 years

Mimi thinks that she has food poisoning from eating some leftover tacos that she found in the back of the refrigerator. She has both vomiting and diarrhea. She needs to be careful about what medicines she takes because she is pregnant.

1. Which medicine could be used to treat vomiting and diarrhea? _____
 - What is the correct dose? _____ml or _____TBSP (tablespoons)
 - How often should this medicine be taken? _____
 - Take no more than _____ in a 24 hour period.

2. When should someone stop use of this medicine and see a doctor? _____

3. Is it safe for Mimi to use this medicine without consulting her doctor? Explain why or why not.

George Lee
Age: 38 years

Uncle George frequently gets really bad head and jaw aches.

1. Which medicine could be used to treat head and jaw aches? _____

- What is the active ingredient in this medicine? _____
- What is the correct dose for this medicine? _____

2. Because Uncle George is a large man, he thinks it is OK to take two doses of this medicine every 4 hours. Explain how taking too much of this medicine may harm his body. Be specific.

3. George often drinks more than three beers a day. Explain why it might be dangerous for him to take this medicine.

Doug Smith
Age: 70 years

Grandpa Doug thinks he has the flu. He has a fever (101 °F or 39 °C), chills, fatigue, muscle aches, headache, cough and stuffy nose. He has arthritis and takes daily doses of a prescription medication that contains acetaminophen. He also has glaucoma, an eye disease that gradually results in blindness.

1. Which medicine could be used to treat flu symptoms? _____

- What is the correct dose? _____
- How often should this medicine be taken? _____
- Take no more than _____ in a 24 hour period

2. Is it safe for Doug to use this medicine without consulting his doctor? Explain why or why not.

Grace Smith
Age: 69 years

Grandma Grace has a runny nose and sinus congestion. She takes a prescription antidepressant. She takes three dietary supplements each day (Ginkgo biloba, Saint John's wort and Vitamin C).

1. Which medicine could be used to treat a runny nose and sinus congestion? _____
 - What is the correct dose? _____
 - How often should this medicine be taken? _____
 - Take no more than _____ in a 24 hour period

 2. Is it safe for Grace to use this medicine without consulting her doctor? Explain why or why not.

 3. List all of the medications and supplements Grace should tell her doctor that she takes.

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Laura Lee
Age: 12 years

Laura has problems with stomach pain, heartburn, bloating, and burping. Eating things such as pizza and spicy foods makes her symptoms worse.

1. Which medicine could be used to treat acid indigestion? _____
 - What is the correct dose? _____
 - How often should this medicine be taken? _____
 - Take no more than _____ tablets in a 24 hour period

2. When should someone stop taking this medicine? _____

3. Is it safe for Laura to use this medicine without talking with her parents or consulting her doctor? Explain why or why not.

Kathy Lee
Age: 15 months

Kathy is crying because she is teething. Her jaw hurts and she has an ear ache. During the day her temperature is normal, but at bedtime she develops a slight fever (99.5°F or 37.5°C).

1. Which medicine could be used to treat children’s pain and fever? _____

2. Kathy is 15 months old. Is it safe for someone to give Kathy this medicine without consulting a doctor? Explain why or why not.

3. The Drug Facts label says, “Use only enclosed dosing cup designed for this medicine.” Explain why you should not use a teaspoon from the kitchen for measuring the medicine.

Andrea Lee
Age: 18 years

Andrea is shopping at the mall when she develops a bad headache. One of her friends offers her some pain reliever pills that she had in her wallet.

1. List two reasons why Andrea should not take over-the-counter medicines offered by friends.

- _____
- _____

2. What should Andrea do if her headache does not get better?

Rick Lee
Age: 19 years

Rick has a horrible headache and fever. Rick has diabetes and he takes insulin. He also has allergies and takes allergy medicine. He tried to call his mother to find out what medicine he should take, but his calls kept going to voicemail.

1. Rick took Extra Strength Pain Reliever but he is still feeling worse. Make a list of three ways that Rick could get reliable health advice.

- _____
- _____
- _____

2. When Rick talks with a health professional, make a list of three things that Rick should be sure to tell them?

- _____
- _____
- _____

The **TeensHealth** from Nemours website provides information on how to communicate with a doctor.

- Talking to Your Doctor
http://kidshealth.org/teen/your_body/medical_care/talk_doctor.html#
- Questions to Ask Your Doctor
http://kidshealth.org/teen/your_body/medical_care/questions_doctor.html