

What's in Your

# Medicine Cabinet?

*A quick guide of standard medical supplies for your home.*



## For A Healthy Medicine Cabinet:

- Check the expiration date before taking or using medications since they all lose their potency over time.
- Go through your medicine cabinet at least once a year and dispose of anything that is past its *best-before date*.
- Consider moving your medications out of the bathroom medicine cabinet since the heat and humidity there can shorten their shelf life. It is better to keep your medications in a lockable dresser drawer in your bedroom.
- For students with children, note age precautions.

## Useful items to have on hand

### Medications:

- Pain Relievers
- Antibiotic Ointments
- Allergy Medications
- Cough and Cold Remedies
  - Antiemetics
- Antidiarrheal Medications

### Bandages:

In various shapes and sizes.

### Antiseptic:

Rubbing alcohol or Hydrogen Peroxide.

### Miscellaneous:

- Thermometer
- Band aids
- Rubbing Alcohol
- Cotton Gauze



## Antidiarrheal Medications

### Brand Names:

Imodium

### Generic Name:

Loperamide HCL. Available as both a liquid and a tablet.

### What they do:

Treat symptoms of acute diarrhea. Should not be used in cases of acute dysentery, which is characterized by blood in stools and elevated body temperature. Useful to have for emergencies.

### NOT recommended for:

Children under the age of 2; pregnant women or nursing women; situations in which constipation is to be avoided (such as people with acute colitis or someone preparing for an operation); or for those allergic to loperamide. If symptoms do not improve within 48 hours, discontinue use and see a doctor.

### Side-effects:

Used as directed, these medications are generally free of side effects. However, an allergic reaction to one or more of the ingredients is a rare possibility.

## Antibiotic Ointments

### Brand Names:

Neosporin; Polysporin; Polytopic; Polytracin

### Generic Name:

Polymyxin B

### What they do:

When applied to minor burns, scrapes and cuts, they ensure the wound does not become infected and that it heals promptly. Antibiotic-containing medications are available in a wide range of formulations as both brand-name and private label products.

### NOT recommended for:

As with any antibiotic-containing medication, prolonged use (more than a week) may result in the growth of resistant organisms, including fungi. Should this occur, discontinue use and seek medical help.

### Side-effects:

Used as directed, these medications are generally free of side effects. However, an allergic reaction to one or more of the ingredients is a rare possibility.

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## **Pain Relievers**

There are two main categories of pain relievers: those that reduce inflammation (aka **anti-inflammatory**) and **acetaminophen**. An anti-inflammatory decreases redness, swelling and burning often associated with sport-related injuries and other soft-tissue injuries such as sprains and arthritis. Acetaminophen, which is a nonsalicylate pain reliever, can be administered safely to nearly everyone, from infants to the elderly. It relieves headaches, as well as earaches and muscle pain. It is used to safely bring down fevers. Acetaminophen has less of a blood-thinning effect than ASA, so is easier on the stomach. Because of its wide applicability, acetaminophen is available in an assortment of tablets, capsules and liquids. Some are flavored to make them easier to take, especially for children. Below you will find information about both types of pain relievers.

### **Acetaminophen**

#### **Pain Relievers**

##### **Brand Names:**

Tylenol

##### **Generic Name:**

Acetaminophen/non-narcotic analgesic

##### **What they do:**

Acetaminophen is a pain reliever that does not reduce inflammation. However, acetaminophen is considered safe for nearly everyone to use.

### **Acetaminophen is NOT Recommended for:**

People who exhibit hypersensitivity to acetaminophen, a rare reaction indicated by the presence of hives or skin rash.

#### **Side-effects of**

##### **Acetaminophen:**

When used as directed, acetaminophen appears to be free of significant side effects.

### **Anti-Inflammatory Pain Relievers**

#### **Ibuprofen**

##### **Brand Names:**

Advil, Motrin

##### **What they do:**

Ibuprofen is also an anti-inflammatory, pain and headache reliever as well as a fever reducer. It is less likely to cause gastrointestinal bleeding than ASA in recommended doses.

### **Ibuprofen is NOT Recommended for:**

- Pregnant women
- Women who are breast feeding
- Children under age 12
- Anyone who has an active peptic ulcer
- Anyone who suffers from kidney, stomach or intestinal disorders
- Has a known allergy to ASA or similar medications

#### **Side-effects of Ibuprofen:**

Include dizziness, ringing in the ears and skin rash.

## **Aspirin**

### **Brand Names:**

ASA, Aspirin, Bufferin, Ecotrin (coated Aspirin)

### **What they do:**

Aspirin is an anti-inflammatory medicine that also helps to reduce fever and relieve pain and headaches. In small doses it can help prevent blood clots from forming.

### **Aspirin is NOT recommended for:**

- People who have bleeding disorders or peptic ulcers
- Women who are pregnant
- People who are using anticlotting drugs
- People who have known allergies to salicylate
- Aspirin is not recommended for children under 18

### **Side-effects of Aspirin:**

With aspirin there is a risk of some stomach irritation. Prolonged use of large doses may also cause gastrointestinal bleeding, blood clotting defects, as well as liver and kidney damage. Some people may experience asthma like or other allergic reactions, such as rashes. ASA may also cause Reye's syndrome in children, a rare brain and liver disorder that can result in death. Note: coated ASA passes through the stomach to the intestine before dissolving, helping prevent stomach irritation.

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## Cough and Cold Remedies

### Brand Names:

Benylin DM-D-E;  
Dimetapp-DM; Nyquil;  
Robitussin DM; Sudafed  
DM; Tylenol Cough and  
Sore Throat; Vicks For-  
mula 44 E Adult/Pediatric

### Generic Name:

Cough Suppressant (DM),  
decongestant (D), expec-  
torant (E)

### What they do:

- Dextromethorphan-containing products (DM) help suppress dry, hacking coughs.
- Pseudoephedrine-containing products (D) relieve nasal congestion.
- Guaifenesin-containing products (E) loosen mucus/phlegm in coughs due to colds.
- Many people choose a multipurpose DM-D-E formulation to take care of the runny nose, cough and chest congestion caused by a winter cold

### NOT recommended for:

- Pregnant, breast feeding or elderly people without first consulting a physician.
- DM-containing products or E-containing products are not recommended for patients with asthma unless prescribed by a physician.
- People with diabetes, asthma, high blood pressure, glaucoma or coronary artery disease should use D-containing products with caution.

• In children, it is especially important not to exceed the recommended dosage given for the child's age and weight.

### Side-effects:

Drowsiness, dizziness, nausea, vomiting, confusion and tightness in the chest. If a cough persists for longer than seven days, see a physician.

## Allergy Medications

### Brand Names:

Allegra; Benadryl; Claritin

### Generic Name:

Antihistamine

### What they do:

Relieve symptoms such as sneezing, runny nose and burning and watery eyes that are a result of seasonal allergic reactions to pollens (such as hay fever). Products include ones that are less sedating, longer lasting or faster acting than others. Some may also contain a decongestant. Some brands are available in the form of topical creams, which may be applied to the skin to relieve the itching caused by insect bites and rashes.

### NOT recommended for:

Pregnant or nursing women. Everyone should use antihistamines with caution because they may cause drowsiness. Not to be used for extended periods (more than a week) without consulting a doctor. Some formulations are not appropriate for children under 12.

### Side-effects:

Drowsiness, dizziness, insomnia, dry mouth, headache, nausea, and nervousness. Reactions can vary wildly from person to person and with the specific medication.

## Antiemetics

### Brand Names:

Emetrol; Travel Aid;  
Travel Tabs

### Generic Name:

Dimenhydrinate. Avail-  
able as a liquid, tablet or  
suppository.

### What they do:

Prevent or relieve motion sickness, nausea and vomiting caused by flue. If flying, take a half hour before you board your flight.

### NOT recommended for:

Not for use with alcohol. Consult a physician before using with antihistamines, tranquilizers or other sedatives. Avoid giving to children under two unless directed by your physician.

### Side-effects:

Some people, especially those taking high doses, may experience drowsiness, dizziness or dry mouth.

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