



MERCY MEDICAL GROUP

Over-the-Counter Cough and Cold Medicines

HOW TO CHOOSE THE CORRECT PRODUCT

The medication that you choose should be based on the symptoms that you are experiencing. Many products contain more than one ingredient. Carefully check to see what the active ingredients are in the product that you are planning to use. Ask your health care professional if you have difficulty choosing a product.

ANTI-HISTAMINES

Chlorpheniramine (Chlor-trimeton®) or diphenhydramine (Benadryl®) are examples of antihistamines that can provide temporary relief of runny nose, sneezing, itchy eyes, nose and throat and watery eyes due to allergies or a common cold. Diphenhydramine is also found in many over-the-counter sleep aids and anti-itch preparations.

Precautions:

- May cause excitability, especially in children
- Do not take if you have asthma, glaucoma, emphysema, chronic lung disease, difficulty breathing or an enlarged prostate, unless directed by a physician
- May cause drowsiness; alcohol increases this effect and should be avoided
- Use caution when driving a motor vehicle or operating machinery.

DECONGESTANTS

Pseudoephedrine (Sudafed®) and phenylpropanolamine are examples of decongestants that can temporarily relieve nasal and sinus congestion (stuffy nose) due to the common cold or allergies. Phenylpropanolamine is also found in many over-the-counter diet aids.

Precautions:

- Do not use if you have diabetes, gout, heart, thyroid, kidney disease or are being treated for high blood pressure, unless under the advice and supervision of a physician
- If nervousness, dizziness, sleeplessness, palpitations or headache occur, stop taking the medication and consult your physician.

COUGH MEDICINES

Dextromethorphan (Delsym®) is an example of a cough suppressant that can temporarily relieve cough due to minor throat irritation that may occur with the common cold or inhaled irritants.

Guaifenesin (Robitussin®) is used to loosen phlegm and thin secretions. It acts as an expectorant and may make your cough more productive.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Read all medication labels for active ingredients, uses, dose, possible side effects or interactions with other drugs
- Inform your physician if you are taking any over-the-counter medications or medications obtained from a different physician

- Inform your physician if you are using any “natural” or herbal products
- If symptoms do not improve within one to two weeks or are accompanied by a high fever, consult your physician before continuing to use the over-the-counter medication
- A persistent cough may be a sign of a serious condition. If a cough lasts more than two weeks, tends to recur or presents with fever, rash or persistent headache, consult your physician
- Many medications should not be given to children. Check the product information and consult your health care professional before giving your child over-the-counter medications.