

BeMedWise During the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic

Tips for Treating Mild Symptoms with OTCs

Every day we are learning more about COVID-19. The symptoms may range from none to mild all the way to those requiring hospitalization. The very mild symptoms may resemble those of a cold and can be treated with over-the-counter (OTC) medications. These include:

- Mild cough
- Nasal congestion
- Mild achiness
- Fatigue

Symptoms that the illness is getting worse include:

- Oral temperature of over 100.3°F
- Dry cough
- Difficulty breathing
- Shortness of breath
- Chills
- Stiff or sore muscles
- Headache
- Diarrhea
- Loss of sense of taste and/or smell

[The Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\)](#) recommends that you contact your doctor immediately if your symptoms worsen to determine if you need testing or more intense treatment.

BeMedWise recommends the following as with any minor condition needing OTC treatment:

- Understand that all medicines whether they are prescription or OTC's, have benefits and risks.
- Carefully read the "Drug Facts" Label that printed on the OTC packaging. The label includes the name of active ingredient(s) in the medicine, the conditions the medicine is intended to treat, dosage instructions, and any warnings including side effects or possible drug interactions.
- Discussing your symptoms with your healthcare provider, doctor or pharmacist to make sure the medicine you are taking is appropriate and will not interfere with other medicines or vitamins or herbal supplements that you might be currently taking.

Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) include aspirin, ibuprofen, and naproxen; available as an OTC medicine and by prescription.

- NSAIDs are commonly used to reduce swelling by inhibiting certain chemicals from forming in your body that can make pain symptoms worse.
- Use of NSAIDs include potential risk for gastrointestinal bleeding. The risk is low for people who use NSAIDs intermittently but goes up for people who take them regularly, especially for people who are older than 65, people with a history of stomach ulcers, or who take blood thinners or corticosteroids (prednisone).
- Using NSAIDs (except for aspirin) increases the risk of heart attack or stroke. Use of NSAIDs can also cause reversible kidney damage.
- Speak to your healthcare provider if you are concerned about taking NSAIDs and rely on these medications to treat chronic diseases.

On March 19, 2020, the [Food and Drug Administration \(FDA\)](#) issued an important public health communication on the use of NSAIDs for COVID-19: "At this time, FDA is not aware of scientific evidence connecting the use of NSAIDs, like ibuprofen, with worsening COVID-19 symptoms."

Acetaminophen is found in some prescription medicines. It's also available as an OTC, both as the sole ingredient and in medicine with multiple ingredients. This common pain relief medicine is an ingredient in more than 600 medicines, including cough suppressants, cold and allergy medicines, fever reducers and some sleep aids. **Acetaminophen** is commonly used to relieve headache, muscle ache, and pain from sinus pressure; reduce fever.

- Taking a higher dose than recommended will not provide more relief and can be dangerous.
- Do not combine multiple acetaminophen-containing medicines.
- Ask a healthcare professional if you are unsure about whether you are taking too much.
- Whatever medicine you may take to manage pain, always aim to use the lowest effective dosage strength for the shortest time.

More helpful links:

- [Tips for giving children over-the-counter or prescription medicine](#)
- [Use Pain Medicines Safely](#)
- [Navigating the OTC Drug Facts Label](#)
- [Reduce medicine side effects](#)
- [Avoid drug interactions](#)
- [Medication Management for Older Adults](#)

Additional Resources:

- [Acetaminophen dosing; Children's and Infants dosing & NSAID dosing](#)
- [Stay one step ahead of the flu](#)
- [Know Your OTCs.org](#) (Cough Cold & Flu)
- [KnowYourDose.com](#) and the [Acetaminophen Awareness Coalition](#), a leader in acetaminophen safe use education.
- [Put Your Medicines Up and Away and out of Children's Sight](#)

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC)

- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)

Food and Drug Association (FDA)

- [COVID-19 and Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs \(NSAIDs\)](#)
- [Beware of Fraudulent Coronavirus Tests, Vaccines and Treatments](#)

National Consumers League

- [Fraud.org](#) Coronavirus Scams

BeMedWise Program at NeedyMeds

50 Whittemore St., PO Box 219, Gloucester, MA 01931
Email: info@bemedwise.org; Visit: www.BeMedWise.org

Visit NeedyMeds.org to learn about healthcare savings resources – free and anonymously.