

# Medicine Safety Guide



**New York City  
Poison Control Center**

(English)

# Medicine Safety Guide

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# Why It Matters to You



The New York City Poison Control Center can help you learn about your medicines and how to take them safely.

As you get older, it is important for you to know about your medicine because:

- The way your body reacts to medicines may change. You need to know about these changes.
- You may take many medicines. You need to know if they can interact with each other.

Knowing about your medicines can help you take them safely. Read this guide to find out how.

# The New York City Poison Control Center

## **Who can you call if you have questions about your medicine?**

Call the New York City Poison Control Center if you have any questions about your medicine.

## **What are some reasons to call the Poison Control Center about your medicine?**

- Taking too much medicine
- Questions about possible medicine interactions
- Questions about side effects

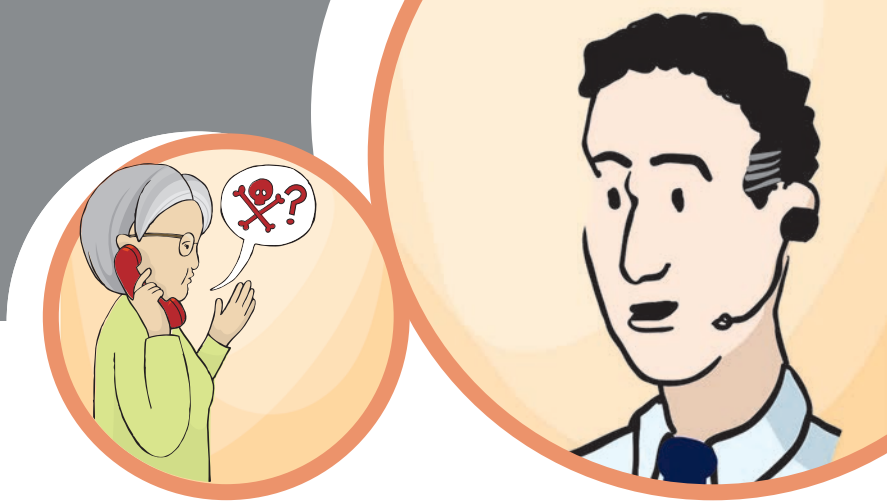
## **How can you contact the Poison Control Center?**

Call **1-800-222-1222**

## **Can you call the Poison Control Center for any other reason?**

Yes. You can call with questions about possible poisons inside and outside your home such as:

- Cleaning products
- Plants
- Chemicals
- Personal care products
- Bites and stings



### **When can you call the Poison Control Center?**

Call at any time – 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

### **Do you have to pay for calling the Poison Control Center?**

No. All calls are free and confidential.

### **Can you get help at the Poison Control Center if you don't speak English?**

Yes. The Poison Control Center has translation services for over 150 languages.

### **Who will answer your calls at the Poison Control Center?**

Registered pharmacists and nurses who are certified in poison information answer your questions about medicine safety.

# Medicine Facts

## What kinds of medicines are there?

- There are 2 kinds of medicines: prescription and nonprescription.
- Herbals, vitamins and minerals are also important to medicine safety.

## What do you need to know about medicine names?

Some medicines have 2 names: a brand name and a generic name.

- A brand name is given by the company that makes it. An example is Tylenol®.
- A generic name is the chemical name for the medicine. An example is acetaminophen.

## What do medicines do?

There are 3 common uses for medicines:

- Help with symptoms
- Prevent an illness
- Cure an illness

## What things affect how medicines work?

- How much medicine is taken
- How often medicine is taken
- How many days it is taken
- If it is taken with other medicines
- If it is taken with or without food

# Prescription Medicine



## What is a prescription medicine?

In the U.S., these are medicines prescribed by certain licensed health care providers:

- Doctors
- Nurse Practitioners
- Physician Assistants
- Dentists

## What is a medicine information sheet?

This is the printed information that is included with your prescription medicine.

## Can I get the prescription label in my language?

- Ask your pharmacist if they can print the label and medicine information sheet in your language.
- Ask for a larger print size if needed.

## What information is on the prescription medicine label?

- Your name and address
- Your doctor's name
- The date the prescription was filled
- Your prescription number
- The name and strength of the medicine
- Instructions for taking the medicine
- The form of the medicine (syrup, tablet, cream)
- The expiration date
- The name, address, and phone number of the pharmacy
- How many times you can refill the prescription

# Prescription Medicine

## What are the stickers on the prescription bottle?

They give you more information, such as:

- Directions for taking medicine
- Warnings about side effects
- Storage of the medicine
- Possible interactions

### Prescription Label Activity

A sample prescription label is shown on page 7. Use it to answer the following questions.\*

1. How many pills should you take? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What time of day should you take the medicine? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What is the prescription number? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What is the telephone number for the pharmacy? \_\_\_\_\_

\*Answers are on page 24.



# Understanding Prescription Medicine Labels



# Nonprescription Medicine



## What are nonprescription medicines?

These are medicines you can buy without a prescription in supermarkets and pharmacies.

## How do I choose a nonprescription medicine?

You can read the label on the medicine, or ask your pharmacist or doctor.

## What information is on the nonprescription medicine label?

- The active ingredients in the medicine treat the problem.
- The use of the medicine
- Warnings tell you about possible problems.
- Directions for taking the medicine

## Nonprescription Medicine Label Activity

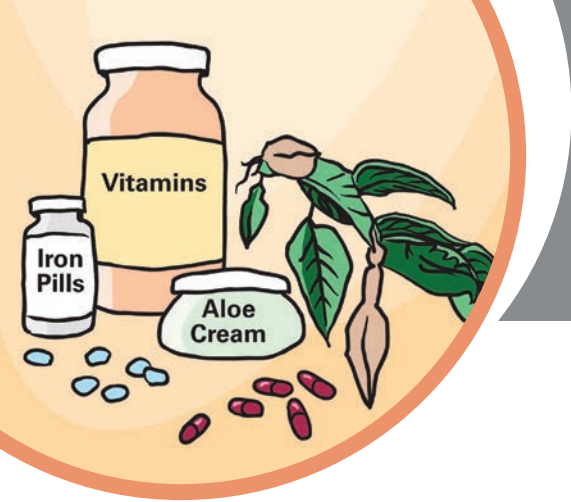
Look at the medicine label on page 9 and complete the following information\*:

1. Why would you use this medicine? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Should you give this medicine to children under 6 years old?  
\_\_\_\_\_ (yes or no)
3. If you are taking warfarin, should you speak to the doctor before beginning this medicine? \_\_\_\_\_ (yes or no)
4. How often should you take this medicine? \_\_\_\_\_

\*Answers are on page 24.

# Understanding Nonprescription Medicine Labels

<b>Drug Facts</b>	
<b>Active Ingredient</b> .....	<b>Purpose</b>
<b>(In each gelcap)</b>	
Acetaminophen 500 mg .....	Pain reliever/ fever reducer
<b>Uses</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ temporarily relieves minor aches and pains due to:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ headache</li> <li>■ the common cold</li> <li>■ minor pain of arthritis</li> <li>■ premenstrual and menstrual cramps</li> <li>■ backache</li> <li>■ muscular aches</li> <li>■ toothache</li> </ul> </li> <li>■ temporarily reduces fever</li> </ul>	
<b>Warnings</b>	
<p><b>Liver warning:</b> This product contains acetaminophen. Severe liver damage may occur if you take:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ more than 8 gelcaps in 24 hours, which is the maximum daily amount</li> <li>■ with other drugs containing acetaminophen</li> <li>■ 3 or more alcoholic drinks every day while using this product</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Do not use</b> with any other drug containing acetaminophen (prescription or nonprescription). If you are not sure whether a drug contains acetaminophen, ask a doctor or pharmacist.</p>	
<p><b>Ask a doctor before use if you have</b> liver disease</p>	
<p><b>Ask a doctor or pharmacist before use if you are</b> taking the blood thinning drug warfarin</p>	
<b>Stop use and ask a doctor if</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ new symptoms occur</li> <li>■ redness or swelling is present</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ pain gets worse or lasts for more than 10 days</li> <li>■ fever gets worse or lasts for more than 3 days</li> </ul>
<p><b>If pregnant or breast-feeding,</b> ask a health professional before use.  <b>Keep out of reach of children.</b> In case of overdose, get medical help or contact a Poison Control Center right away. Quick medical attention is critical for adults as well as for children even if you do not notice any signs or symptoms.</p>	
<b>Directions</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ do not use more than directed (see Liver warning)</li> </ul>	
adults and children 12 years and over	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ take 2 gelcaps every 6 hours while symptoms last</li> <li>■ do not take more than 8 gelcaps in 24 hours</li> <li>■ do not use for more than 10 days unless directed by a doctor</li> </ul>
children under 12 years	do not use this adult product in children under 12 years of age; this will provide more than the recommended dose (overdose) and could cause liver damage
<b>Other information</b> store at 20° - 25°C (68° - 77°F)	
<p><b>Inactive ingredients</b> colloidal silicon dioxide, croscarmellose sodium, D&amp;C red #33, edible ink, FD&amp;C blue #1, FD&amp;C red #40, FD&amp;C yellow #5, gelatin, hydroxypropyl cellulose, hypromellose, polyethylene glycol, povidone, starch, stearic acid, titanium dioxide</p>	



# Herbals, Vitamins and Minerals

## What are herbals?

Herbal products have active ingredients taken from plants. An example is ginseng.

## What are vitamins and minerals?

Vitamins and minerals are found in most foods. People may take vitamins and minerals to add to their diet. Examples are Vitamin C and Calcium.

## Can herbals, vitamins or minerals affect your medicine?

Yes, they may affect the way medicine works in your body.

## Should you tell the doctor or pharmacist if you take herbals, vitamins or minerals?

Yes, it is important to tell the doctor or pharmacist if you are taking these products. Tell them:

- What you take
- How much you take
- When you take it

# Reactions to Medicines

A big part of medicine safety is knowing how your medicines can affect you. Three categories of reactions you could have are: side effects, allergies and interactions.

## What are side effects?

- Side effects are common reactions you may have when you take certain medicines.
- Side effects can include headache, sleepiness and upset stomach.
- Almost all medicines can cause side effects.
- Some side effects are mild and others can be more serious.

## What are drug allergies?

- Drug allergies are unusual reactions to a medicine.
- Reactions can include hives or trouble breathing but are different for each person.

## What are drug interactions?

- Drug interactions are when two or more medicines combine in your body. The combination may change the way the medicine works.
- Dangerous interactions are possible when you combine more than one medicine (prescription, nonprescription or herbal product).



## Medicine Safety

### What should I do before I begin a new medicine?

- Tell your doctor about:
  - medicines, herbals, vitamins and minerals you take everyday
  - your drug allergies
  - your food allergies or special diet
- Ask your doctor, pharmacist or the Poison Control Center questions about all new medicines:
  - the name of your medicine
  - the purpose of your medicine (symptom relief, prevention or cure)
  - how to take your medicine
  - possible side effects
- Use one pharmacy for all your medicines. This will help your pharmacist identify any possible drug interactions.

### What should I do when taking my medicines?

- Keep track of your medicines (see page 15 for more information).
- Turn on the lights and wear your glasses.
- Read the medicine label carefully.
- Take only what the doctor prescribes. Do not cut pills in half or take extra pills unless instructed to do so.
- Take antibiotic prescription medicines for the full course even if you feel better.
- Bring extra prescriptions when traveling. Adjust dose if there is a time change.
- Tell your doctor if you have long lasting or serious side effects from your medicine.

# Medicine Safety

## Can I share medicines with someone else?

No. Sharing medicine can be dangerous. Do not take someone else's medicine or give yours to another person.

## What do I do when my medicine expires?

- Do not save old medicines. They lose their strength over time.
- Call the Poison Control Center to find out the best way to properly dispose of your medicines.

## When should I get help with my medicines?

- Call your doctor right away if you have a rash, a fever, trouble breathing or another serious problem.
- Call your doctor or pharmacist if you miss a dose of your medicine.
- Call the Poison Control Center with questions about your medicine including dosing, interactions and side effects.

# Learning About Your Medicine

## What can you do to learn more about your medicines?

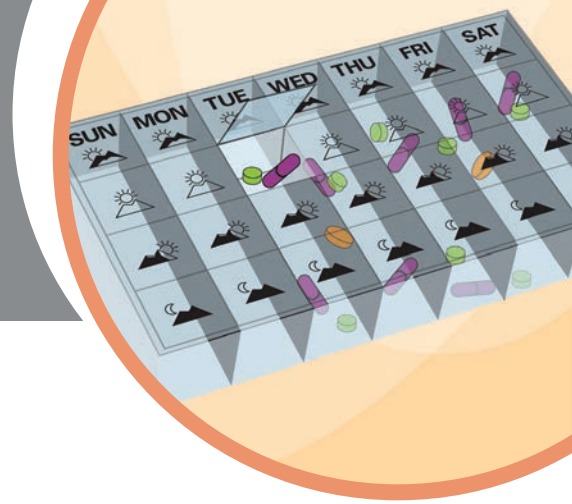
- Ask your doctor or nurse
- Ask your pharmacist
- Read the medicine label
- Read the medicine information sheet

## What do you need to know about your medicine?

- The name of your medicine
- The purpose of your medicine
- Directions for taking your medicine
- What should be avoided when taking you medicine



# Keeping Track of Your Medicine



## What are some ways to keep track of your medicine?

- Keep a list of all the medicines you take, include prescription medicine, nonprescription medicine, herbals, vitamins and minerals. An example is on page 19.
- Use a pill box to divide your medicines into daily or weekly doses.
- Use a calendar to write down when you took your medicines and when you need to refill your prescriptions.
- Use a Medicine Log like the one on page 21 to write down when you took your medicines.

## Can my pharmacist help me track my medicines?

- If you use one pharmacy for all your medicines, the pharmacist can keep track of your prescription medicine on the computer. The pharmacist can also fill your weekly pill box.



# Medicine Safety Tips

## **Talk to your pharmacist, doctor or nurse**

Tell them the medicines, herbals, and vitamins you take. Tell them about any allergy you have to food or medicine.

## **Learn about your medicine**

Find out its name, its purpose, possible side effects, and directions for taking it.

## **Follow directions carefully**

Be sure you can see your medicine label clearly and take only the amount directed.

## **Monitor your reactions**

Call your doctor right away if you have a rash, a fever, trouble breathing or another serious problem.

## **Keep track of your medicines**

Use a medicine list, medicine log, pill box or calendar to remember all your medicines and when you've taken them.

## **Don't take expired medicines**

Check the expiration date and ask the Poison Control Center how to get rid of your medicines.

## **Don't share medicine**

Do not take someone else's medicine or give yours to another person.

## **Call the Poison Control Center for more information**

Call **1-800-222-1222** any time to ask questions about your medicines.

## Medicine Safety Activity

Using everything you've learned about medicine safety, answer the following questions\*:

1. What are two ways you can keep track of your medicines? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Can I share my prescription with other family members? \_\_\_\_\_

3. Where can I find directions for taking my medicine? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Should I take expired medicine? \_\_\_\_\_

5. Who can I call with questions about my medicines? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**\*Answers are on page 24.**

# Medicine Safety Tools – Notes

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## Medicine List



Fill in this form to help you keep track of all the medicines you are taking. Bring it to doctors' appointments, pharmacy visits or to the hospital. Be sure to include all prescription medicines, nonprescription medicines, herbals, vitamins and minerals you are taking. Keep this list up to date. 1-800-222-1222

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Medicine, Vitamin, Herbal, or Mineral	What it is for	When to take it	How much to take	Take with or without food	Possible side effects	Prescribed by

Allergies \_\_\_\_\_ Emergency Contact \_\_\_\_\_

Doctors' Name \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone Name \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship \_\_\_\_\_

Pharmacy \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone Telephone (home) \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone (cell) \_\_\_\_\_

For questions about your medicine, please call NYC Poison Control Center at 1-800-222-1222

## Medicine List

Fill in this form to help you keep track of all the medicines you are taking. Bring it to doctors' appointments, pharmacy visits or to the hospital. Be sure to include all prescription medicines, nonprescription medicines, herbals, vitamins and minerals you are taking. Keep this list up to date.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Medicine, Vitamin, Herbal, or Mineral		What it is for	When to take it	How much to take	Take with or without food	Possible side effects	Prescribed by
Brand Name	Generic Name						

Allergies \_\_\_\_\_ Emergency Contact \_\_\_\_\_

Doctors' Name \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Name \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship \_\_\_\_\_

Pharmacy \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone (home) \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone (cell) \_\_\_\_\_





For questions about your medicine, please call NYC Poison Control Center at 1-800-222-1222

## Medicine Log

Use this form to keep track of when you take your medicines. Each day, list all your medicines and check the box showing when you took a dose. Keep this log with you throughout the day.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Day	Date	Name of Medicine	 Morning	 Noon	 Evening	 Bed





**For questions about your medicine call  
New York City Poison Control Center 1-800-222-1222**

# Medicine Log

Use this form to keep track of when you take your medicines. Each day, list all your medicines and check the box showing when you took a dose. Keep this log with you throughout the day.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Day	Date	Name of Medicine	 Morning	 Noon	 Evening	 Bed

**For questions about your medicine call  
New York City Poison Control Center 1-800-222-1222**



# Emergency Information Sheet



## Your Personal Information

Complete this form. Keep it in a place you will easily find it in case of a medicine emergency.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number \_\_\_\_\_

## Emergency Contact Information

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Numbers (home) \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Numbers (cell) \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship \_\_\_\_\_

## Primary Care Provider

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Pharmacy Telephone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Allergies \_\_\_\_\_



The New York City Poison Control Center is here to help you with medicine safety. Call us anytime at **1-800-222-1222**

# Answers for Activities

## Prescription Label Activity (page 6)

1. How many pills should you take? **One tablet**
2. What time of day should you take the medicine? **At bedtime**
3. What is the prescription number? **240566**
4. What is the telephone number for the pharmacy? **555-555-5555**

## Nonprescription Medicine Label Activity (page 8)

1. Why would you use this medicine? **For pain relief/fever reducer.**
2. Should this medicine be given to children under 6 years old? **No**
3. If you are taking warfarin, should you speak to the doctor before beginning this medicine? **Yes**
4. How often should you take this medicine? **Every 6 hours while symptoms last.**

## Your Medicine Safety Activity (page 17)

1. What are two ways you can keep track of your medicines?  
Any two answers:
  - **Medicine list**
  - **Medicine log**
  - **Pill box**
  - **Calendar**
2. Can I share my prescription with other family members? **No**
3. Where can I find directions for taking my medicine? Any answer:
  - **On the medicine label**
  - **On the medicine information sheet**
  - **Ask my doctor, nurse or pharmacist**
4. Should I take expired medicine? **No**
5. Who can I call with questions about my medicines?  
**The New York City Poison Control Center: 1-800-222-1222, your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.**

# Multi-ingredient Nonprescription Medicine Label

<b>Drug Facts</b>	
<b>Active Ingredient .....Purpose (In each gelcap)</b>	
Acetaminophen 325 mg ..... Pain reliever/fever reducer	
Dextromethorphan HBr 10 mg ..... Cough suppressant	
Phenylephrine HCl 5 mg ..... Nasal decongestant	
<b>Uses</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ temporarily relieves these common cold/flu symptoms:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ minor aches and pains</li> <li>■ headache</li> <li>■ sore throat</li> <li>■ nasal congestion</li> <li>■ cough</li> <li>■ helps clear nasal passages</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<b>Warnings</b>	
<b>Liver warning:</b> This product contains acetaminophen. Severe liver damage may occur if you take: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ more than 12 caplets in 24 hours, which is the maximum daily amount</li> <li>■ with other drugs containing acetaminophen</li> </ul>	
<b>Do not use</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ with any other drug containing acetaminophen (prescription or nonprescription). If you are not sure whether a drug contains acetaminophen, ask a doctor or pharmacist.</li> <li>■ if you are now taking a prescription monoamine oxidase inhibitor (MAOI)</li> </ul>	
<b>Ask a doctor before use if you have</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ liver disease</li> <li>■ diabetes</li> <li>■ heart disease</li> <li>■ high blood pressure</li> </ul>	
<b>Ask a doctor or pharmacist before use if you are</b> taking the blood thinning drug warfarin	
<b>When using this product</b> do not use more than directed	
<b>Stop use and ask a doctor if</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ nervousness, dizziness or sleeplessness occur</li> <li>■ pain, nasal congestion or cough gets worse or lasts more than 7 days</li> </ul>	
<b>If pregnant or breast-feeding</b> , ask a health professional before use. <b>Keep out of reach of children.</b> In case of overdose, get medical help or contact a Poison Control Center right away. (1-800-222-1222) Quick medical attention is critical for adults as well as for children even if you do not notice any signs or symptoms.	
<b>Directions</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ do not use more than directed (see Liver warning)</li> </ul>	
adults and children 12 years and over	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ take 2 gelcaps every 6 hours while symptoms last</li> <li>■ do not take more than 8 gelcaps in 24 hours</li> <li>■ do not use for more than 10 days unless directed by a doctor</li> </ul>
children under 12 years	do not use this adult product in children under 12 years of age; this will provide more than the recommended dose (overdose) and could cause liver damage
<b>Inactive ingredients</b>	
acesulfame potassium, carnauba wax, flavor, magnesium stearate, microcrystalline cellulose	
<b>Questions or comments? 1-888-423-0139</b>	Store at 20° - 25°C (68° - 77°F)



Using your Smartphone download  
a free QR Reader application to  
receive more information.



**Save to your contacts.**

The New York City Poison Control Center is  
here to help you with medicine safety.

Call us anytime at **1-800-222-1222**

