

How to read an over-the-counter medication label

In Canada, every over-the-counter (also known as non-prescription) medication must have a label on it. The label has important information about how to use the medication safely. It helps you know if this product is safe for you to use, when to use the medication, how often and how much you can take.

Where to find the medication label

If your medication comes in a box, look for “Drug Facts” on the outside of the box. The information can be found in the box, too. It can be printed on the inside of the box, the medication container or a piece of paper.

If you only have the medication bottle, you will find the information on the bottle. On some bottles, you may need to peel back the label to find more information. In this case, you will see words such as “Peel here” or “Peel back” at the edge of the label.



Information on a medication label

A Active ingredient

What is in the medication that makes it work (e.g., acetaminophen, ibuprofen) and how much.

Purpose

What the active ingredient generally does in the body (e.g., relieves pain).

B Uses

What conditions the medication is meant to help with or prevent. This can include treating symptoms (e.g., sore throat) or health conditions (e.g., migraine).

C Warnings

What you should know before using and while using the medication. This can be information about:

- How the medication might affect you (side effects)
- Allergies to the medication
- When not to use the medication
- When to stop using the medication



D Directions

How to use the medication safely:

- What age you need to be to use the medication safely
- How much medication you should use each time (e.g., 1 tablet, 30 ml)
- How often you can take the medication (e.g., every 4 to 6 hours)
- How much of the medication you can take in one day (e.g., not more than 8 tablets in 24 hours)

E Other information

Some labels have more information, such as how to store the medication and what to do with unused medication.

F Inactive ingredients

What else is in the medication, such as coatings, dyes and flavours.

G Questions?

How to contact someone about the medication. This is usually the company that made the medication.

For more information visit parachute.ca/teensandmedication

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