

What are the risks?

There are risks associated with of abusing OTC medications or not using OTC medication as directed

Psychological:

- Confusion
- Can cause you to become hostile
- Mood instability
- Prolonged use can increase tolerance, (where you require more to have desired effect)
- Increased anxiety
- Dependency and addiction

Physical:

- Increased risk of ulcers
- Abdominal pain
- Symptoms persist if dose is not correct
- Allergic reaction
- Nausea and vomiting
- Fatigue
- Loss or increased appetite
- Varied blood pressure
- Damage to kidneys
- Breathing problems
- Ringing in the ears
- Overdose

Did you know?

Approximately 3.1 million of young people aged between 12 and 25 have used over the counter cough medicines, to get high.

OTC medications and the law

The Medicines Act 1968 defines three legal categories of medicines:

- General sales list medicines (GSL)
- Pharmacy medicines (P)
- Prescription-only medicines (POM)

Under this act, most medicines can only be sold or supplied by a pharmacy under the supervision of a pharmacist with a prescription. Some medicines (GSL) can be sold at other premises, such as convenience stores but there is still strict legislation. It's illegal to sell medicines from market stalls or from vehicles, such as at car boot sales.

Find out more

If you would like more information or support on OTC medication or you are affected by someone else's use please contact us at Inclusion Recovery Hampshire.

Information is also available at:

NHS Website: www.nhs.uk

Talk to Frank Website: www.talktofrank.com

HOW TO CONTACT US

NORTH: 01782 639856
StarsNorth@mpft.nhs.uk

EAST: 01283 741053
StarsEast@mpft.nhs.uk

WEST: 01785 270080
StarsWest@mpft.nhs.uk

Or visit: www.staffstars.org

You. Me. Us

This leaflet was created by:  Part of Midlands Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust Find out more at www.inclusion.org

Over-the-Counter (OTC) Meds

What you need to know!



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What is OTC?

Over the counter medication is also known as (OTC) or non-prescribed meds.

- These terms refer to medicine that you can buy without a prescription.
- They are safe and effective when you follow the directions on the label followed.
- One of the most commonly abused drugs are OTC medicines.

The myths

- It is safe because you can buy it over the counter
- You can take OTC meds for as long as the unwanted symptoms persist

The truth is any medication can be harmful if the dosage guidelines are not followed correctly. It is important to check the medication guidelines on how long that medication can have continuous use as it can be harmful to take for long periods of time.

How is OTC medication taken?

It is important to read the medication guidelines, to ensure you;

- Take the correct dose
- Take it in the correct way (i.e. dissolving not swallowing)
- Do not take any longer than recommended

If you are taking medications that have been prescribed by your GP, it is advisable to seek advice before buying over the counter medication. Some medications interact with each other, which can then cause adverse side effects.

What does it look like?

Over the counter medication will look no different than prescribed medication. The packaging may look a bit more attractive, as companies are competing for you to buy their brand.

Over the counter medication can come in many forms:

- Tablets
- Liquids
- Oils
- Creams
- Patches
- Soluble
- Sprays

The main difference you may find between prescribed medication and over the counter is the strength of the medication. Over the counter medications are there to treat minor ailments, whereas your GP can prescribe medications to treat more serious diseases, ailments and illnesses.



What are the effects?

The effects of using over the counter medications are positive, if you use it according to the guidelines provided with the medication.

If you take the medication in the way prescribed, dependent upon their purpose they can;

- Manage pain
- Clear rashes
- Remove headaches
- Reduce or stop allergy symptoms
- Digestion relief
- Cold and Flu relief
- Motion sickness
- Cough medicines
- And many more

Some people abuse OTC medication to self-medicate for pain relief, help with sleep or mental illness like anxiety and depression. Abusing these medications can also give users a euphoric 'high' or hallucinations. Any use outside of what is recommended on the label is considered abuse.

