

## Over-the-Counter Drugs

Over-the-counter (OTC) drugs are drugs you can buy without a prescription. Americans spend almost \$5 billion dollars on OTC products every year.

Reading the product label is very important when using OTC drugs. It is the only way to know how to use the drug correctly.

A few years ago, the FDA passed a rule about labels on OTC drugs. The law says that all OTC products must have a new, standard label called "Drug Facts." This label will help people use OTC drugs safely and effectively.

### How is the new label different?

- It will use plain language. For example, instead of words like "assistance," it will use more common words like "help."
- It will use larger type, making it easier to read.
- It will look the same, and be in the same place, on every product.

### What will be on the label?

- Active ingredients
- Purpose — What the drug is for and the name of the drug's family
- Uses — which ingredients are used to treat which symptoms
- Warnings — who should not take the product, problems to avoid
- Directions — how much to take, how often to take it
- Inactive ingredients — what else is in the product. This will help people avoid allergic reactions.

### How will the new label help me?

- It will help you compare products and choose the best one for their symptoms.
- You will get the full benefits of a product because you can use it correctly.
- You will be able to avoid problems by having all important information.

### When will I see the new label?

- All OTC drugs must have the new label by 2008.
- Many products will have the label in the next 2 years.

### To Learn More...

Contact FDA

<http://www.fda.gov/cder/otc/label/quesanswers.htm>

or 1-888-463-6332 (1-888-INFO-FDA)

FDA/Office of Women's Health [www.fda.gov/womens](http://www.fda.gov/womens)

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