

Cold Medications for People Living with Chronic Kidney Disease

Identifying Safe Cold Medications to Take

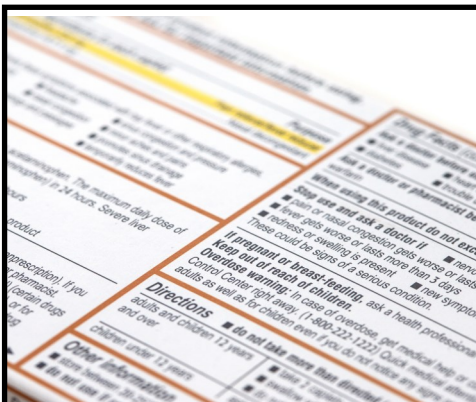
Kidney disease affects the way medications work in the body in many ways, making it important to choose OTC medications carefully. With multiple brand names (e.g. Tylenol®) on OTC medication, it can be hard to identify which ones are safe to use. Identifying the active ingredients in an OTC medication assists in knowing which are safe and which to avoid. When reading OTC medication labels, always follow the directions carefully and ask your doctor or pharmacist if you have any questions.



Over-the-counter (OTC) medications can be purchased at a drug store or grocery store without a prescription to help relieve various cold symptoms.

Seven Components of Drug Labels

There are seven components of an OTC medication label under the drug facts section. While all parts of a drug label are important, **the active ingredients and warnings are most important when making sure the medication is safe for chronic kidney disease.**



Drug Facts

- 1 **Active ingredients**
- 2 **Uses**
- 3 **Warnings**
- 4 **Directions**
- 5 **Other information**
- 6 **Inactive ingredients**
- 7 **Questions or comments?**

Avoid taking combination products that treat several symptoms with multiple active ingredients. It is better to choose medications that treat each symptom separately.

Attached is a chart outlining common cold symptoms and the active ingredients found in medication that can help with those symptoms, making it easier to choose safe OTC medications.

Herbal medications are not regulated by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). These medications do not have the same rigorous testing standards that OTC medications do and can be dangerous for those with decreased kidney function. Always check with your doctor or pharmacist before using these products.

OTC Medications

Note: Brand names listed below are not all-inclusive. Multiple brand names fit the safety criteria. Always verify the active ingredients section of the products you select match the safety guidelines below.

Symptom(s)	Safe to Take	Not Safe to Take	Potential Safety Issues
Pain, fever and/or body aches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acetaminophen (e.g., Tylenol®) • Topical diclofenac (e.g., Voltaren® gel) for less than one week • Acetylsalicylic acid (aspirin) 75 to 81 milligrams (mg) if over 19 years and recommended by your doctor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ibuprofen (e.g., Advil®, Motrin®), naproxen (e.g., Aleve®) or 325mg of acetylsalicylic acid (aspirin) or more • Products with multiple ingredients (combination products) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harmful to the kidneys, can cause swelling (from water retention) and increased blood pressure • Can increase bleeding risks • Combination products often have decongestants and high dose antihistamines that can be harmful to kidneys
Sneezing, itching and/or runny nose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chlorpheniramine, diphenhydramine (e.g., Benadryl®), brompheniramine and doxylamine • Half of the recommended dose on the label for loratadine (e.g., Claritin®), desloratadine (e.g., Clarinex®), cetirizine (e.g., Zyrtec®), fexofenadine (e.g., Allegra®) or levocetirizine (e.g., Xyzal®) • Nasal sprays such as triamcinolone (e.g., Nasacort®) or fluticasone (e.g., Flonase®) • Saline nasal sprays (e.g., Ocean®) or nasal cromolyn sodium (e.g., Cromolyn®) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DO NOT take full doses of loratadine (Claritin®), desloratadine (Clarinex®), cetirizine (Zyrtec®), fexofenadine (e.g., Allegra®) or levocetirizine (Xyzal®) • Products with multiple ingredient (combination products) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full doses of listed antihistamines can cause increased side effects (e.g., dry mouth, drowsiness) and decreased kidney function • Combination products often have decongestants and high dose antihistamines that can be harmful to kidneys

OTC Medications

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Symptom(s)	Safe to Take	Not Safe to Take	Potential Safety Issues
Sore throat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acetaminophen (e.g., Tylenol[®]) Acetylsalicylic acid (aspirin) 75 to 81mg if over 19 years and recommended by your doctor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ibuprofen (e.g., Advil[®], Motrin[®]), naproxen (e.g., Aleve[®]) or 325mg of acetylsalicylic acid (aspirin) or more 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Harmful to the kidneys, can cause swelling (from water retention) and increased blood pressure Can increase bleeding risks
Nasal and/or sinus congestion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nasal sprays such as triamcinolone (e.g., Nasacort[®]) or fluticasone (e.g., Flonase[®]) Saline nasal sprays (e.g., Ocean[®]) or nasal cromolyn sodium (e.g., Cromolyn[®]) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pseudoephedrine (e.g., Sudafed[®]), phenylephrine, oxymetazoline (e.g., Afrin[®]) nasal spray Products with multiple ingredients (combination products) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can increase blood pressure which can effect kidney function Combination products often have decongestants and high dose antihistamines that can be harmful to kidneys
Cough	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dextromethorphan for a dry cough or guaifenesin (e.g., Mucinex[®] and Robitussin[®]) for a productive cough 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Products with multiple ingredients (combination products) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Combination products often have decongestants and high dose antihistamines that can be harmful to kidneys
Diarrhea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Loperamide (e.g., Imodium[®]) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bismuth subsalicylate (e.g., Pepto Bismol[®] and Kaopectate[®]) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can hurt the kidneys and increase bleeding risks
Constipation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Docusate (Colace[®]), polyethylene glycol (Miralax[®]), sennosides (Senna[®] or Senokot[®]) or bisacodyl (Dulcolax[®]) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Magnesium or phosphate containing laxatives (e.g., milk of magnesia, magnesium citrate, Fleet[®] enema, Fleet[®] oral liquid or Fleet[®] capsules) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can cause the magnesium and phosphate in the body to increase to dangerous levels Can cause diarrhea, which can increase the risk of dehydration and harm kidneys