Over The Counter (OTC) Medications

Over-The-Counter (OTC) Medications

Definition

- OTC medications are drugs that can be purchased without a prescription from a licensed healthcare professional (doctor or dentist).
- These medications are considered safe and effective for use by the general public, provided they are used as directed on the product label.

Key Characteristics:

- Approved by drug regulatory authorities (e.g., DCGI in India, FDA in the US)
- Label must provide clear instructions on:
  - Dosage
  - Indications
  - Side effects
  - Precautions
- Designed for short-term treatment of minor or common ailments.

Examples:

- Paracetamol for fever or headache
- Antacids for indigestion
- Cough syrups, lozenges, topical creams for skin conditions, etc.

Need for OTC Medications

Accessibility and Convenience

- Helps patients access **immediate relief** without visiting a doctor.
- Reduces the burden on healthcare facilities for **minor conditions**.

Cost-Effectiveness

- Avoids consultation fees.
- Many OTCs are **affordable generic options**.

Promotes Self-Care

- Encourages individuals to take **active responsibility** for their health.

Copyright © 2025 by Engacy Learning Private Limited. All rights reserved. Reproduction or distribution without written consent is strictly prohibited.

- Useful in **remote areas** with limited access to medical care.

Chronic Ailment Symptom Management

- Helps manage **recurring symptoms** like acidity, constipation, mild allergies, etc.

Role of Pharmacists in OTC Medication Dispensing

Pharmacists play a crucial role in ensuring the safe and effective use of OTC drugs:

Assessing the Need

- Identify if the patient’s symptoms can be managed with OTC products.
- Detect red flags that may require referral to a physician.

Educating Patients

- Explain correct usage, dosage, timing, and potential side effects.
- Educate on what not to do, such as combining OTCs with prescription drugs without guidance.

Monitoring Safety

- Check for drug interactions (e.g., OTC antihistamines with sedatives).
- Avoid duplicate therapy (e.g., two products with paracetamol).

Ensuring Rational Drug Use

- Avoid misuse, such as overuse of laxatives, nasal decongestants, or analgesics.

Record-Keeping and Documentation

- Though not mandatory, documenting OTC sales can be helpful in monitoring trends or recurring misuse.

OTC Medications in India

- Unlike countries with an official OTC drug list (like the USA), India does not have a formal OTC classification. However, drugs not included under Schedule H, H1, X, or G of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act are available OTC.
- **Examples Commonly Used in India:**
  - Paracetamol (antipyretic/analgesic)
  - Cetirizine (antihistamine)
  - ORS powders (rehydration)
  - Antacids (e.g., Digene, Gelusil)
  - Topical antiseptics (e.g., Dettol, Savlon)

Copyright © 2025 by Engacy Learning Private Limited. All rights reserved. Reproduction or distribution without written consent is strictly prohibited.

- Skin creams for fungal or bacterial infections

- **Regulatory Status:**
  - India is currently working on formalizing an OTC list via CDSCO.
  - Proposed classification: Category 1 (pharmacist advice required), Category 2 (freely available).

Counseling for OTC Products

Pharmacist-led counseling ensures safe, informed self-treatment.

Essential Components:

- **Identify the condition**: Ask patient for symptoms, duration, severity.
- **Recommend appropriate OTC**: Based on symptoms and age.
- **Explain correct usage**: Dose, frequency, duration, and method (e.g., take after food).
- **Discuss side effects**: Common ones like drowsiness, GI discomfort.
- **Provide safety warnings**:
  - Avoid alcohol or driving if the drug causes drowsiness.
  - Not to exceed the maximum daily dose.
- **When to seek medical help**:
  - If no improvement in 3–5 days.
  - If symptoms worsen or new symptoms appear.

Tools to Aid Counseling:

- Pictograms for illiterate patients.
- Printed leaflets or information stickers.
- Language-appropriate instructions.

Self-Medication and Role of Pharmacists in Promoting Safe Practices

Definition of Self-Medication

- Self-medication is the use of drugs by individuals to treat self-recognized symptoms or conditions, without consulting a physician. It includes:
  - Taking OTC drugs without advice.
  - Reusing old prescriptions for a new illness.

Copyright © 2025 by Engacy Learning Private Limited. All rights reserved. Reproduction or distribution without written consent is strictly prohibited.

- Sharing medicines with family/friends.

Risks of Self-Medication

- Misdiagnosis and masking of serious illness
- Drug interactions with ongoing therapies
- Overdose/toxicity (e.g., paracetamol-induced liver injury)
- Antibiotic resistance from irrational use
- Dependency on sleep aids or painkillers

Role of Pharmacists in Promoting Safe Self-Medication:

Education and Awareness

- Pharmacists can educate patients about the risks and benefits of self-medication.
- Encourage reading labels and following instructions.

Screening & Triage

- Help determine whether the condition is minor or needs a doctor's attention.

Monitoring for Misuse

- Watch for patterns of frequent OTC purchases indicating possible misuse or dependency.

Promoting Rational Drug Use

- Encourage use of generic medicines when appropriate.
- Discourage antibiotic use without prescription.

Documentation & Follow-up

- Maintain basic records (especially in chain pharmacies).
- Provide follow-up advice if symptoms persist or worsen.

Examples of Safe Self-Medication Counseling by Pharmacists

- Advising ORS for mild dehydration.
- Recommending paracetamol for short-term fever.
- Suggesting saline nasal sprays for minor cold symptoms.
- Warning not to use leftover antibiotics.

Copyright © 2025 by Engacy Learning Private Limited. All rights reserved. Reproduction or distribution without written consent is strictly prohibited.

Responding to Symptoms, Minor Ailments, and Self-Care Advice

Pain Management: Responding to Symptoms, Minor Ailments, and Self-Care Advice

Common Symptoms:

- Headache, muscle pain, joint pain
- Menstrual cramps, dental pain

Assessment:

- Location, nature, duration, and severity of pain
- Presence of injury, inflammation, or underlying illness
- Use of previous medications

Self-care Advice:

- Adequate rest and relaxation
- Cold compress for injuries or inflammation
- Warm compress for stiffness or muscle pain
- Proper hydration in headache cases

OTC Recommendations:

- Paracetamol (preferred first-line)
- Ibuprofen (for inflammation)
- Diclofenac (topical gel)

Referral Indications:

- Pain persisting beyond 3 days
- Sudden, unexplained or severe pain
- Accompanied by fever or swelling

Cough: Responding to Symptoms, Minor Ailments, and Self-Care Advice

Types:

Copyright © 2025 by Engacy Learning Private Limited. All rights reserved. Reproduction or distribution without written consent is strictly prohibited.

First Hope

FREE PREVIEW

Click here to visit our website

PHARMACY PREMIUM NOTES

Complete subject and semesters are available on FirstHope app only.

Scan or click here

Click here to get the app >

Available on Google Play

JOIN THE FIRSTHOPE COMMUNITY

Join our Telegram channel

Click here to join Telegram >

Scan or click here

@FirstHopeNotes

Instagram

@firsthope.official

Click here to follow >

YouTube channel

FirstHope-Pharmacy / Live streams

Click here to watch >

WhatsApp channel

Follow FirstHope on WhatsApp

Click here to join >

FirstHope website

firsthope.co.in

Click here to visit >

B.Pharm / D.Pharm / M.Pharm / Pharm.D

Preview notes. Complete subjects and semesters in the FirstHope app.