OTC Medication

Definition of OTC Medication

What does OTC mean?

- OTC stands for Over-the-Counter. These are medications that can be sold directly to a consumer without a prescription from a healthcare provider.
- In most countries, medicines are classified into two broad categories:
    - **Prescription-Only Medicines (POM):** These require a doctor's prescription.
    - **Over-the-Counter Medicines (OTC):** These do **not** require a prescription and are available for self-care by the patient.
- In the community pharmacy setting, OTC medications are a core part of daily operations. The community pharmacist plays a key role in advising, educating, and monitoring the safe and effective use of OTC drugs by the general public.

Regulatory Considerations

- Governments and regulatory bodies (like the FDA in the U.S., MHRA in the UK, or CDSCO in India) approve which drugs can be classified as OTC based on their safety profile, low potential for abuse, and simplicity of use.
- Pharmacists must follow legal guidelines regarding which OTC drugs can be sold and under what conditions.

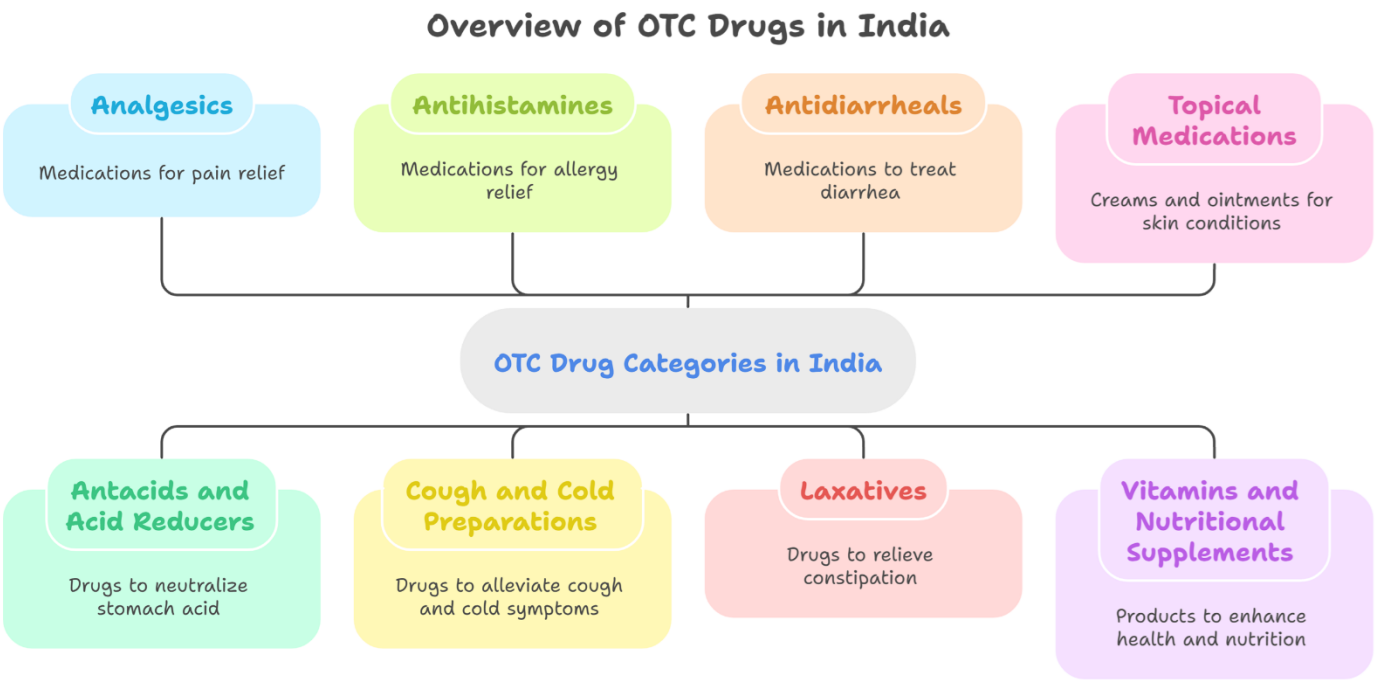
Key Characteristics of OTC Medications

- **Non-prescription status**: Legally allowed to be sold without a doctor's prescription.
- **Self-diagnosable conditions**: Used for health issues that consumers can identify and manage themselves.
- **Proven safety profile**: Undergo safety and efficacy evaluations for self-use.
- **Labeled instructions**: Clear directions for use, dosage, side effects, and warnings are printed on the packaging.
- **Regulated by authorities**: In India, regulated by CDSCO; in the U.S., by the FDA.

OTC Drug Categories and Common List (India)

- In India, there is **no official, standalone list** titled "OTC Drugs" published by CDSCO.
- However, the classification is inferred based on drugs that are **not included in prescription-only schedules** like **Schedule H, H1, X, G** under the **Drugs and Cosmetics Rules, 1945**.

Below is a categorized list of commonly available OTC medications:



A. Analgesics (Pain Relievers)

- Used for minor aches, pains, and fever.
  - **Paracetamol (Acetaminophen)**
  - **Ibuprofen**
  - **Aspirin** (used also for its antiplatelet effect in low doses)
- **Pharmacist's Role:**
  - Ensure the patient knows the maximum daily dose.
  - Warn about the risk of liver damage (with paracetamol) and stomach upset (with NSAIDs).

B. Antacids and Acid Reducers

- For indigestion, heartburn, and acid reflux.
  - **Aluminum hydroxide + Magnesium hydroxide**
  - **Ranitidine** (withdrawn in many places)
  - **Famotidine**
  - **Omeprazole** (low dose – in some countries available OTC)

- **Pharmacist's Role:**
  - Ask about symptoms to rule out serious conditions.
  - Ensure short-term use unless advised by a doctor.

C. Antihistamines

- Used for allergies, hay fever, and hives.
  - **Loratadine**
  - **Cetirizine**
  - **Diphenhydramine** (causes drowsiness)
  - **Chlorpheniramine**
- **Pharmacist's Role:**
  - Discuss side effects (e.g., drowsiness).
  - Warn against operating machinery if sedating antihistamines are used.

D. Cough and Cold Preparations

- For symptomatic relief of colds, coughs, nasal congestion.
  - **Dextromethorphan** (cough suppressant)
  - **Guaifenesin** (expectorant)
  - **Phenylephrine / Pseudoephedrine** (decongestants)
  - **Menthol-based lozenges**
- **Pharmacist's Role:**
  - Evaluate symptoms to ensure bacterial infections are not present.
  - Caution in hypertensive patients (pseudoephedrine increases blood pressure).

E. Antidiarrheals

- Used to manage diarrhea.
  - **Loperamide**
  - **Oral Rehydration Salts (ORS)**
- **Pharmacist's Role:**
  - Stress importance of fluid replacement.
  - Advise seeking medical care if symptoms persist >2 days or with fever.

F. Laxatives

- Used for constipation.
  - **Lactulose**

- **Bisacodyl**
- **Psyllium husk (bulk-forming laxative)**
- **Senna**

➢ **Pharmacist's Role:**

- Ask about diet, fluid intake, and duration of constipation.
- Warn about overuse and dependency on stimulant laxatives.

G. Topical Medications

➢ Used for skin infections, minor wounds, or rashes.

- **Antiseptics**: Povidone iodine, hydrogen peroxide
- **Antifungals**: Clotrimazole cream
- **Anti-inflammatory**: Hydrocortisone 1% (in some countries)

➢ **Pharmacist's Role:**

- Confirm diagnosis of skin condition.
- Counsel on proper application technique and duration.

H. Vitamins and Nutritional Supplements

➢ Used to treat or prevent deficiencies.

- **Multivitamins**
- **Vitamin D, Calcium**
- **Iron supplements**
- **Folic acid**

➢ **Pharmacist's Role:**

- Avoid duplication if the patient is taking prescribed supplements.
- Ask about diet and symptoms of deficiency.

Counselling for OTC Medications

- OTC drugs are perceived as "safe" because they are widely available. However, inappropriate use can lead to:
  - Adverse drug reactions
  - Drug interactions
  - Worsening of the condition due to masking of symptoms
  - Delay in diagnosis of serious illness

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