

# LESSON 1: All About Medicine

**Teachers:** Before each lesson in the *OTC Medicine Safety* program, inform students that they should never take medicine without the supervision of a parent or trusted adult.

## Objectives

- Define over-the-counter (OTC) medicines and prescription medicines
- Understand the similarities and differences between OTC medicines and prescription medicines.
- Define how to responsibly use medicine.

## Materials:

- Student Worksheet 1 (see last page)
- [Answer Key](#)
- Empty medicine bottle with dosing cup
- Paper
- Pen or pencil
- Internet access (optional)

Visit the homepage at [scholastic.com/OTCmedsafety](http://scholastic.com/OTCmedsafety) for additional lesson plans and a variety of resources to support these discussions both inside the classroom and at home.

**Time:** One 40-minute class period

**Technology Connection:** [Download Whiteboard Image: Sealed Bottle](#), [Download Whiteboard Image: Medicine Label](#), [Download Classroom Poster: Drug Facts label](#).

## Key Vocabulary

- **Over-the-counter (OTC) medicine:** Medicine that is bought in a pharmacy, drugstore, or supermarket and obtained without the need for a doctor's prescription.
- **Prescription (Rx) medicine:** Medicine that is specially ordered for you by a doctor or other qualified healthcare practitioner, available only from a pharmacist.
- Both OTC and Rx medicines can cause real harm if label instructions aren't read and followed when they are administered.

## Lesson Steps

1. Assess students' knowledge before you begin. Explain that research shows students in their age range are beginning to self-medicate; and without the information and comprehensive understanding that they need to make safe choices about medicine, kids can easily do more harm than good. Tell students that it's important to have an understanding of safe medicine use before they become more responsible for their own self-care. Have students complete the [Pre-Assessment Quiz](#) online or print out and reproduce the survey. Save the completed quizzes, as students will complete the same quiz for a post-program comparison.
2. Begin a class discussion by asking students to brainstorm a list of symptoms they have had when they were not feeling well. (*Answers may include: upset stomach, headache, fever, cough, etc.*)
3. Then invite students to share a personal story that describes what happens when they get sick. (*Answers may include: go to the doctor, take medicine, rest, drink water or juice, stay home from school, etc.*)
4. Discuss how there are many different ways that doctors treat sickness, one of which is recommending medicine. Medicines fall into two main categories: OTC or prescription. These categories are defined as follows:

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If students need more support, ask them to brainstorm different medicines they are familiar with. As a class, decide whether each medication belongs in the OTC or Rx category. Make sure the list includes OTC medicines that students may not think of as medicines, such as cough drops and eyedrops.

- At the front of the class, display and identify each of these components: a sample of an OTC bottle of fever reducer, the age-appropriate dosing device (child dosing cup), the [sealed bottle image](#), the [medicine label image](#), and the classroom poster image of the [Drug Facts label](#).
- Describe how every medicine is unique and has a certain set of characteristics that enable it to treat specific symptoms. Have students recall a time when they had to take medicine. Ask students:  
Q: *What measuring tools or devices has your parent or a trusted adult used to give you liquid medicines?*  
Q: *Has anyone ever taken medicine without the permission of a trusted adult? If so, why?*  
Q: *Have you ever read the Drug Facts label on an OTC medicine container?*
- Explain how every medicine comes with dosing directions, and that dosing instructions on OTC medicines appear on the *Drug Facts* label. **Reinforce the importance of always communicating with a trusted adult before taking any medicine.** The purpose of these instructions is to help make sure that the medicine is taken correctly. When we do not follow instructions, the medicine may not work the way it is meant to, it can make you feel worse, or it can even hurt you. You may have allergic reactions or experience side effects like dizziness or nausea. Sometimes when you mix certain foods with a medicine, the medicine does not work properly.
- Organize the class into groups of five or six. Distribute Student Worksheet 1 and have teams complete the worksheet. Discuss their answers as a class and invite any follow-up questions about the lesson.
- Distribute the family newsletter resource available at [scholastic.com/OTCmedsafety](https://www.scholastic.com/OTCmedsafety) and encourage the students to continue the discussion at home.

**Research Extension**—Provide students with the following prompt:

*How does a medicine become approved for over-the-counter use? Are there any medicines that used to be available by prescription only but are now available over-the-counter? Research the answers to these questions, and write a paragraph describing your findings.*



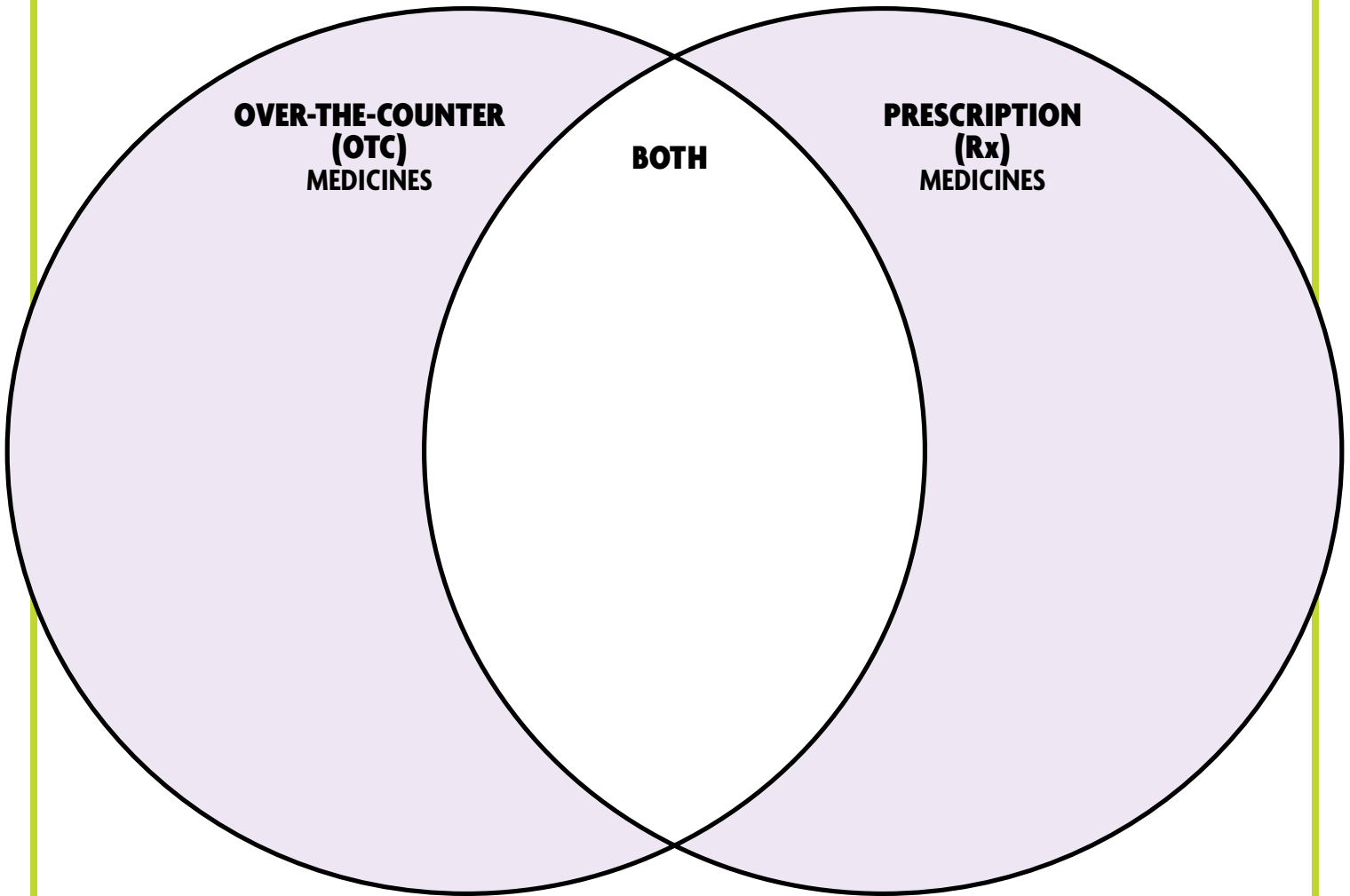
### Conclusion and At-Home Connection

After your discussion of OTC medicines and prescription (Rx) medicines—as well as a brief overview of the *Drug Facts* label—tell the class that you'll be moving on to a broader, more expansive lesson about the label in Lesson 2. Send home the Family Newsletter resource, available in the Families Section at [scholastic.com/OTCmedsafety/parents](https://www.scholastic.com/OTCmedsafety/parents), so students may continue the discussion at home. Encourage students to discuss what they have learned about the Poison Help number, to post the number in a visible place in their home, and to get family members to save the number in their mobile phones.

STUDENT WORKSHEET 1

# Over-the-Counter vs. Prescription Medicines

**Directions:** Sort the statements by number in the correct place in the Venn diagram.



## About Medicines: Rx, OTC, or Both?

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|---|--|--|--|
| <p><b>1.</b> Children should use only with permission of a parent or trusted adult.</p> <p><b>2.</b> Should only be used by the person for whom the medicine was ordered.</p> | <p><b>3.</b> Prescribed by a doctor or nurse practitioner for one person.</p> <p><b>4.</b> The medicine label, including the directions, must be read and followed carefully before use.</p> | <p><b>5.</b> Can buy without a doctor's prescription.</p> <p><b>6.</b> Dangerous to misuse or abuse.</p> | <p><b>7.</b> A healthcare professional or your local poison center can answer questions about this medicine.</p> |
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**Did you know?** In 2015, America's poison centers managed about 630,000 medicine exposure cases involving children, tweens, and teens.