

LESSON 2: Reading and Understanding the *Drug Facts* Label

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

- Identify the *Drug Facts* label.
- Learn the definitions of the terms on the *Drug Facts* label.
- Know the importance of reading and understanding all of the information on the *Drug Facts* label.
- Learn the potential consequences of not reading and understanding all of the information on the *Drug Facts* label.
- Identify the steps to take in the event of a medicine mistake.

Materials:

- Student Worksheet 2 (see last page)
- [Answer Key](#)
- Two empty fever-reducer bottles (could use a liquid product and a solid-dose product)
- Two empty bottles of pain relievers
- Two empty bottles of antacids
- Two empty bags of cough drops
- Paper
- Pen or pencil
- Internet access (optional)
- [Classroom Poster: *Drug Facts* label](#)
- Projector
- Whiteboard (optional)
- For additional practice: scavenger hunt chart and additional empty medicine containers

Time: Two 40-minute class periods

Technology Connection: FDA's [Medicines in My Home video](#), [Drug Facts label](#), [Download Classroom Poster: Drug Facts label](#), [Download Whiteboard Image: Medicine Label](#), [Digital Storybook: The Perfect Project](#).

Key Vocabulary

- ***Drug Facts* label:** A standard label on over-the-counter (OTC) medicines that provides information about the medicine, including the active ingredients, instructions for use, and important warnings. Understanding the important information contained within the *Drug Facts* label and properly reading the *Drug Facts* label are critical elements for safe use of OTC medicines.

Lesson Steps

1. Begin the discussion by challenging students to focus on the overall importance of reading directions. Ask students:
Q: What could happen if you only read part of the directions on a test?
Discuss responses and begin to link the importance of reading informational text in order to understand key information or directions that are vital to completing a task properly or getting the desired results.
2. Explain that all directions are not the same, meaning that sometimes the directions won't appear at the top of the page like on a test. You may have to look for them and you should always ask your teacher,

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parent, or a trusted adult to clarify them so you fully understand what to do.

3. Explain that the class is going to learn about the importance of reading and following all of the instructions found on the *Drug Facts* label of OTC medicines.
4. Organize the class into groups of five or six students and give one medicine container to each group. Distribute Student Worksheet 2.
5. Show the FDA's [Medicines in My Home video](#), and pause it when necessary to highlight the different sections on the Drug Facts label and have students ask questions. In support of the video, have students look closely at the medicine samples they have in their groups.
6. Before beginning the worksheet activity, ask students:
Q: Which medicine does your group have?
Q: Where are the directions on medicines and what do they tell you?
Q: Where are the warnings?
Q: Where is the ingredients section?
7. Explain that directions and drug information for OTC medicines are found on *Drug Facts* labels, which appear on OTC medicines per FDA regulation.
8. Walk students through each section of the labels on the worksheet. Create a vocabulary list to reinforce new terms, explaining that these terms provide us with the information we need to use medicine responsibly. If you are using a whiteboard, project the image of the [Drug Facts label](#) onto the board. Review the different sections of the label (use the [Classroom Poster](#) to support the discussion) and reinforce the new vocabulary words or terms:

Key Terms

- **ACTIVE INGREDIENTS:** The ingredients in the medicine that make it work.
 - **WARNINGS:** Safety information including side effects, the questions you should ask a doctor before taking the medicine, and which medicines to avoid using at the same time.
 - **OTHER INFORMATION:** How to store the medicine.
 - **USES:** Describes the symptoms that the medicine treats.
 - **DIRECTIONS:** Indicates the amount or dose of medicine to take, how often to take it, and how much you can take in one day.
 - **INACTIVE INGREDIENTS:** Ingredients not intended to treat your symptoms (e.g., preservatives, flavorings).
 - **QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS?:** Call the company if you have questions about a specific medicine.
9. Add the new terms to the whiteboard as you review each and discuss the definitions. Have students refer to their medicine containers to reinforce these terms. You may also link the label to <http://www.bemedwise.org/label/label.htm> and roll over each section as you review.
 10. If students need more practice with reading *Drug Facts* labels on different medicines, provide an assortment of empty medicine bottles, bags, or boxes, and the following scavenger hunt activity.

[\[Download image of chart to distribute\]](#)

Find a Drug Facts label that... (write the name of the medicine in the appropriate box)			
Includes a warning about allergic reactions	Says to take the medicine every 4 to 6 hours	Instructs you to ask a doctor before use	Says to use the medicine to relieve minor aches and pains
Warns that you may get drowsy when using this medicine	Has different instructions for adults and children under 12	Says to store the medicine away from excessive moisture	Lists more than one active ingredient
Says to take the medicine every 8 hours	Includes a sore throat warning	Says to keep the medicine out of reach of children	Says to use the medicine to relieve heartburn

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11. Explain to students that when medicines are not used properly, real consequences, including serious harm, may result. **Reinforce the importance of always communicating with a trusted adult before taking any medicine.** The consequences of using medicine improperly can include:
 - **Ingredients may cause allergic reactions.**
 - **Medicines can be harmful if you take too much and may not be effective if you do not take the proper dose.**
 - **Certain medicines can interact with other medicines and may cause side effects or harm when mixed.**
 - **Many medicines contain the same active ingredients, and should never be taken at the same time.**
12. Discuss how to use the **Poison Help number, 1-800-222-1222**. This number should be used if a student or his or her parent or a trusted adult has questions about how to take or give medicine, if there's been a medicine mistake, or if there's been an accidental ingestion of medicine. Inform students of the following:
 - Calls are free.
 - Calls are confidential.
 - Experts answer the phone 24/7, 365 days a year.
 - Unlike 911, it doesn't have to be an emergency to call. Call with questions or for information, or if you have an emergency.
 - Poison center experts get more than 3 million calls a year about all kinds of things. They have heard everything, so don't be embarrassed to call.

Research Extension—Provide students with the following prompt:

Research the regulation that required *Drug Facts* labels to appear on OTC medicines. Write a paragraph to describe the regulation and identify some of the problems that it helped to address.



Conclusion and At-Home Connection

After exploring the *Drug Facts* label—its purpose, the components of the label, why your students and their families should be familiar with it—advise students that you'll be moving on to the importance of using the appropriate medicine measuring tools and safe storage in Lesson 3. 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 check out the [digital storybook *The Perfect Project*](#), 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 2

Understanding the *Drug Facts* Label

Directions: Think about the discussions you've been having in class about over-the-counter (OTC) medicines and the issues that can arise from not reading and understanding the *Drug Facts* label. Use the sample label on the medicine box pictured here in order to answer the questions below. Write your answers on the back of this sheet.

Think It Through

1. What kind of information might be found in the "Do Not Use" section under "Warnings"? Why is it important for someone to see that information?
2. Are there any side effects associated with the use of this medicine?
3. According to information on this label, what are some reasons that someone might have to contact a doctor before or after giving this medicine?
4. What section of the label would you refer to in order to determine the correct dose?
5. What is the poison center phone number?

Drug Facts

Active ingredients	Purpose
Medicine 100 mg	cough suppressant
Medicine 150 mg	nasal decongestant

Uses Temporarily relieves:

- coughing due to minor throat and bronchial irritation
- nasal congestion

Warnings

Do not use if you have ever had an allergic reaction to this product or any of its ingredients.

Ask a doctor before use if you have liver or kidney disease. Your doctor should determine if you need a different dose.

When using this product

- you may get drowsy
- be careful when driving a motor vehicle or operating machinery
- excitability may occur, especially in children

Stop use and seek medical help right away if allergic reaction occurs.

Keep out of reach of children. In case of overdose, get medical help or contact a Poison Control Center right away (1-800-222-1222).

Directions

- Tablet melts in mouth. Can be taken with or without water.

Age	Dose
adults and children 12 years and older	2 tablets every 12 hours; do not use more than 4 tablets in a 24-hour period
children 6 years to under 12 years	1 tablet every 12 hours; do not use more than 2 tablets in a 24-hour period
children under 6 years of age	ask a doctor

Other information

- store at 20°–25°C (68°–77°F) ■ keep dry

Inactive ingredients
 anhydrous citric acid, aspartame, magnesium stearate, maltodextrin, modified food starch, sodium bicarbonate, D&C yellow no. 10

Questions or comments?
 Call weekdays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. EST at 1-800-XXX-XXXX.

This is not an actual *Drug Facts* label.

Did you know? Poison centers are staffed with experts, including doctors, nurses, and pharmacists who can help answer questions about medicines or provide help over the phone if you come into contact with a poison. Calls are free and private.