

LESSON 4: Medicines and Misuse

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 “misuse” as it relates to over-the-counter (OTC) medicines.
- Understand why misusing OTC medicines can be harmful.
- Identify the steps to take when encountering an OTC medicine misuse situation.

Materials:

- Student Worksheet 4 (see last page)
- [Answer Key](#)
- [Slides for pre-activity](#)
- Whiteboard or slide projector
- *OTC Medicine Safety*'s family newsletter resource
- Internet access (optional, for lesson Extension)

Visit the homepage at 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: Lesson Extension: Encourage Students to Develop a Photo or Video Documentary of the Subject Matter. [Download: Slides for Activity](#); [Web Resource: DrugFacts: Prescription and Over-the-Counter Medications, National Institute on Drug Abuse](#); [Download: Culminating Activities](#).

Key Vocabulary

- **Misuse:** (as it pertains to OTC medicine): Taking an OTC medicine in a manner other than what is directed by the *Drug Facts* label or a doctor.

Lesson Steps

PART 1

1. After completing Lessons 1–3, students will have foundational knowledge about OTC medicines, the *Drug Facts* label, and the importance of using the dosing device that comes with the medicine.
2. Begin this lesson by prompting an open class discussion:
Q: Do you think OTC medicines are dangerous if they are misused—meaning used in a manner other than what is directed by the Drug Facts label or a doctor?
Allow students to offer opinions. Through a show of hands, tally the “yes” versus “no” opinions on the board. Inform students that by the end of this lesson, the class will revisit the question.
3. Help illuminate how students’ preconceived ideas can sometimes cloud the real facts about a topic. Reinforce this idea by [showing three slides](#) (sun, potatoes, and vitamins—see an explanation below). At the end, you’ll ask students:
Q: How are these three items related?
(Answer: All are okay when used or stored properly and used in moderation, but when they are not, all can have detrimental health effects.)
4. Afterward, go back in the slide show and uncover the answers beneath each item.

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SLIDE #1: Sun

ANSWER: Fifteen minutes of sun per day is essential for maintaining a healthy level of vitamin D, which promotes the retention of calcium, mostly in your bones. Calcium is very important in the development of your bones and teeth. Too much sun, however, may cause skin damage or even skin cancer. To protect against damage from the sun's rays, avoid the sun between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., when its rays are strongest; wear protective clothing, and use a sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or higher.**

Now you know: Use a good sunscreen when outdoors for more than 15 minutes and avoid prolonged sun exposure.

[*Source: American Skin Association]

SLIDE #2: Potatoes

ANSWER: Potatoes are an excellent source of carbohydrates, which your body needs for energy. But potatoes naturally contain solanine, a toxic ingredient that can cause a number of health problems. Solanine thrives in well-lit environments and is present when you see a green tinge under the potato's skin and experience a bitter taste.

Now you know: Store potatoes in a cool, dark place and be on the lookout for discoloration and bad taste.

SLIDE #3: Vitamins

ANSWER: Vitamins can be purchased over the counter and are widely available. They're easy to access, but can have risks if not used appropriately. They should be taken under the guidance of a parent or trusted adult. Vitamins can be dangerous if they're misused or if a person isn't using them in accordance with the *Supplement Facts* label on the bottle.

Now you know: Read the label and talk to a trusted adult before taking vitamins.

PART 2

1. Discuss how these three items are common in our lives and appear safe, but there are specific guidelines for using or consuming them. If you do not follow the safety precautions for proper use and storage, there could be harmful consequences. Explain that when you dig a little deeper, you often discover new information that you might ordinarily overlook.

Now Ask: *Can you think of other items you come in contact with regularly that are safe when used properly, but dangerous when misused?* (Answers may include: appliances, cars, medicines, cleaning supplies, etc.)

2. Select medicine as a topic for further discussion. Post the following questions on chart paper around the room. Have students rotate to the six stations and write down their responses to these questions:

Are the following actions safe or dangerous? What negative effects could result from:

- not reading and following the *Drug Facts* label?
- taking more than the recommended dose?
- redosing more frequently than directed on the label?
- using more than one medicine with the same kind of active ingredient at the same time?

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- taking medicines for longer than directed on the label?
- taking medicines for reasons or symptoms other than what is directed on the label?

If students have access to technology, they could quickly research the negative effects as they rotate through the stations. Alternatively, students could brainstorm ideas with a partner, then share their answers with the entire class.

3. During the discussion of students' responses, make sure that students understand that all of these scenarios are "dangerous" because there are very real and potentially dangerous consequences when someone misuses OTC medicines. The *Drug Facts* label provides instructions for using the medicine safely. OTC medicines can be harmful if misused or if not used as directed by the *Drug Facts* label.
4. Ask students:
Q: What is the perception among your friends about misusing prescription or OTC medicines?
(Answers may include: Misusing prescription drugs is dangerous and can be deadly; no one really gets hurt from misusing OTC medicines.)
Q: Based on the information you've learned in OTC Medicine Safety, do you believe that there is a need to inform people about the dangers of misusing OTC medicines?
5. Distribute Student Worksheet 4, and invite students to conduct research for their writing via *OTC Medicine Safety* or an additional web resource, such as [this page](#) from the National Institute on Drug Abuse. Explain to students that this worksheet can be used to launch a larger community-wide campaign. A coalition of families, students, and community leaders can show collective support for making their communities and schools safer places for children and their families. A coalition will help to increase and disseminate information within the school and community about the safe use and storage of OTC medicines and the dangers of misuse. Students can work with their families and neighbors to submit a collection of letters to local town officials and leaders that encourage getting the word out about safe medicine use.



Extension: Discuss the impact of visuals or videos in helping to increase the safe use and storage of OTC medicines, and assign a photo or video documentary that deals with taking safety precautions at home.

Conclusion and At-Home Connection

After you've introduced the concept of "misuse" as it pertains to OTC medicines, reviewed the importance of understanding the Drug Facts label, and explained that safety precautions for proper use and storage are critical, tell students that you'll be moving on to the program's [Culminating Activities](#). Send home the Family Newsletter resource available in the Families' section at 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.

Sources: National Institute on Drug Abuse. DrugFacts: Prescription and Over-the-Counter Medications

