

A Quick Guide to Common Medications

The following information is current as of January 2021 and has been compiled from data and guidelines set forth by the USDA, FDA, CDC, NIH, and US Poison Control Centers. This information may be used as a quick reference for general information; however, do consult the actual medication label and/or your physician for current recommendations and guidelines for use.

When packing medications in your first aid kit, be sure to take note of how you are packing them. We recommend carrying the individually wrapped tablets, as they are easier to see how many you have, their expiration dates, etc. They're also more hygienic. Below is a very small list of some of the more common medications and their uses.

OVER THE COUNTER (OTC) MEDICATIONS

- **Acetaminophen** (*Tylenol*); pain, fever
- **Activated Charcoal** (*ActiDose*); poisoning
- **Alamag** (*Mylanta*); upset stomach, diarrhea, nausea
- **Aspirin** (*Bayer*); pain/fever/swelling/blood thinner
- **Bismuth** (*Pepto*); upset stomach, diarrhea, nausea
- **Diphenhydramine** (*Benadryl*); vomit, antihistamine
- **Electrolytes** (*NOT Gatorade*); hydration balance
- **Glucose** (*sugar*); diabetic emergencies
- **Ibuprofen** (*Advil*); pain, fever, swelling
- **Loperamide** (*Imodium*); diarrhea
- **Naproxen** (*Aleve*); pain, swelling, swelling
- **Triple-Antibiotic** (*NOT Neosporin*); antibacterial

PRESCRIPTION (RX) MEDICATIONS

- **Acetazolamide** (*Diamox*); altitude illness
- **Albuterol** (*asthma inhaler*); asthma, COPD, HAPE
- **Amoxicillin** (*Tylenol*); broad spectrum antibiotic
- **Azithromycin** (*Zithro*); broad-spectrum antibiotic
- **Ciprofloxacin** (*Cipro*); traveler's diarrhea
- **Doxycycline**; broad-spectrum antibiotic
- **Epinephrine** (*EpiPen*); severe allergic reactions
- **Hydrocodone** (*Vicodin*); pain
- **Warfarin** (*Coumadin*); blood thinner

ACETAMINOPHEN – (TYLENOL, APAP)

Acetaminophen works by reducing substances in the body which cause pain, fever, and inflammation. Acetaminophen has three associative properties: it is an antipyretic (fever reducer), anti-inflammatory, and analgesic (pain killer).

USES

Relieves pain caused by conditions such as headaches, rheumatoid arthritis, and muscle pain and is used to reduce fever caused by infection. Acetaminophen will NOT help to prevent heart attack, as it is not a blood thinner.

CONTRAINDICATIONS

Acetaminophen is not recommended for those allergic to acetaminophen, or those who have liver disease or a history of alcoholism. Do NOT give tablets to children under the age of 12. For children under

age 12, only give pediatric acetaminophen. Avoid cold, allergy, pain, or sleep medications while taking acetaminophen. Do NOT take simultaneously with alcohol or sodium nitrite.

DOSAGES

Acetaminophen typically comes in tablet form (325mg or 500mg) or in liquid form. The maximum allowed recommended dose per 24-hour time period for an adult is 4000mg. Use as directed. An overdose of acetaminophen typically results in a stomachache, loss of appetite, dark urine, and jaundice (yellowing of the skin and/or eyes).

ASPIRIN – (BAYER, BUFFERIN, ST. JOSEPH)

Aspirin is a member of the groups salicylates and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs). It works by reducing substances in the body which cause pain, fever, and inflammation. Aspirin has four associative properties: it is an anticoagulant (blood thinner); antipyretic (fever reducer); anti-inflammatory, and analgesic (pain killer).

USES

Relieves pain caused by headaches, rheumatoid arthritis, muscle pain and more. It is also used to reduce fever caused by infection. Aspirin may help to prevent a heart attack if taken on a daily basis. If chewed within the first 3 minutes of the warning signs of a heart attack appearing aspirin may reduce damage caused to the heart.

CONTRAINDICATIONS

People who should NOT take Aspirin include those who: are anaphylactically allergic to aspirin, or other NSAIDs; have asthma, rhinitis, or nasal polyps; have an active peptic ulcer; or are under the age of 2 AND currently have or are recovering from either chickenpox or the flu (due to a risk of Reye's Syndrome). Reye's Syndrome is a rare but serious condition that causes swelling in the liver and brain and may be fatal. Do NOT take aspirin while taking NSAIDs (such as ibuprofen), antidepressants, or Coumadin (a common prescription blood thinner).

DOSAGES

Aspirin comes in two common doses: Adult (325mg) and Low Dose (81mg). Aspirin may also come in the form of Extra Strength (500mg) and Arthritis Relief (650mg). The absolute maximum allowed dose per 24 hour time period for an adult is 1300mg; 80mg for children ages 2-11. Use as directed.

IBUPROFEN – (ADVIL, MOTRIN)

Ibuprofen is a nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) and works by blocking your body's production of certain natural substances that cause inflammation. Ibuprofen is also commonly used to reduce fever and treat pain and inflammation caused by many conditions such as aches, pains, arthritis, menstrual cramps, etc.

USES

Relieves pain caused by conditions such as headaches, inflammation, rheumatoid arthritis, and muscle spasms.

CONTRAINDICATIONS

People who should NOT take Ibuprofen include those who: are anaphylactically allergic to NSAIDs, are also taking aspirin (ibuprofen causes aspirin to become less effective); or are under the age of 6 months.

DOSAGES

Ibuprofen comes in tablets (200-800mg), chewables of 50mg & 100mg; and liquid capsules of 200mg. The maximum recommended allowed dose per 24 hour time period for an adult is 3200mg. Use as directed.

NAPROXEN SODIUM – (ALEVE, NAPROSYN)

Naproxen sodium is a nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) and works by blocking your body's production of certain natural substances that cause inflammation. Naproxen is used to reduce fever and treat pain and inflammation caused by many conditions such as aches, pains, arthritis, cramps, etc.

USES

Naproxen sodium reduces swelling and pain, and is used to treat many conditions, including arthritis, menstrual pain, muscle and joint inflammation, and gout. In some instances, naproxen sodium may cause drowsiness, stomach pain, nausea and vomiting.

CONTRAINDICATIONS

Do not give to anyone who is allergic to naproxen sodium or aspirin, nor to children under the age of 2. Combining naproxen with other NSAIDs may increase the risk of stomach & intestinal bleeding. A number of prescription drugs have serious interactions with naproxen.

DOSAGES

This medication typically comes in tablet form (220mg) which may work for up to 12 hours. It also comes at higher dosages (up to 750mg) with a prescription. The maximum recommended dose per 24-hour time period for an adult is 660mg (absolute max, 1500mg per day). Use as directed.

DIPHENHYDRAMINE HCL – (BENADRYL, THERAFLU)

Diphenhydramine is an antihistamine used to relieve symptoms of allergy, hay fever, and the common cold. These symptoms include rash, itching, watery eyes, itchy eyes/nose/throat, cough, runny nose, and sneezing.

USES

Diphenhydramine HCl is a common antihistamine used for treating allergic reactions and is also used as an antiemetic (to prevent vomiting) among other medical issues. It also blocks the action of acetylcholine,

making it useful as a sedative by causing drowsiness (or may cause hyperactivity, especially in children). It is also commonly used to prevent and treat motion sickness as well as to control abnormal movements in people who have early-stage Parkinson's disease (a disorder of the nervous system that causes difficulties with movement, muscle control, and balance) or who are experiencing movement problems as a side effect of a medication.

CONTRAINDICATIONS

Diphenhydramine should not be given to children under age 2. When giving to children ages 2-11, use caution and follow directions on the medication. Most people are NOT allergic to diphenhydramine, but rather to the pink dyes used in the capsule form. Clear liquid or dissolving tongue tab forms may not cause an adverse reaction.

DOSAGES

Diphenhydramine comes primarily as a tablet (25mg), but also comes as a chewable (12.5mg and 25mg). The typical adult may require 50mg. The maximum allowed recommended dose per 24-hour time period for an adult is 400mg, however there is no maximum dose. Use as directed.

BISMUTH SUBSALICYLATE – (PEPTO-BISMOL, KAOPECTATE)

Bismuth subsalicylate is an antacid medication used to treat temporary stomach related discomfort, such as nausea, heartburn, indigestion, upset stomach, diarrhea (and traveler's diarrhea).

USES

Bismuth subsalicylate is an over-the-counter medication used for treatment of diarrhea, gas, upset stomach, indigestion, heartburn, nausea and as a prophylaxis for traveler's diarrhea. Bismuth subsalicylate is also used in conjunction with other medications to treat *Campylobacter* bacterial infections.

CONTRAINDICATIONS

Do not give Bismuth to those who have had an allergic reaction to aspirin or other NSAIDs. The use of Bismuth in children under age 3 is not recommended. Use should be stopped in the presence of bloody stool (dysentery) or fever. Do not use with *Doxycycline*.

DOSAGES

This medication typically comes in tablet form (262mg or 525mg) which may work for up to 30 minutes. Bismuth also exists in Liquid form (15mL or 30mL). The maximum allowed recommended dose per 24-hour time period for an adult is 1048mg. Use as directed.

ELECTROLYTES – (NUUN, PEDIALYTE, ORS)

Electrolytes are a mixture of salts, potassium, calcium carbonate, glucose and other trace elements the body needs. When you sweat, you not only lose water, but also a massive amount of electrolytes. A loss of electrolytes is commonly linked with dehydration.

USES

Electrolytes are given to those suffering from increasing fatigue, muscle cramps, or heat exhaustion due to sweating or excessive body fluid loss. Electrolytes come in many forms: powders, tablets, liquids, and gels.

CONTRAINDICATIONS

Patients should not take electrolytes if they are allergic to any ingredient in the product. Those with high blood potassium levels should NOT take electrolytes. Do not give electrolytes in any other form than in a liquid solution to severely dehydrated patients. Ensure that the solution is administered slowly (1/2 cup over 20 minutes; small, soda bottle cap sized sips are recommended).

DOSAGES

Electrolyte supplements come in various forms and recommended doses. The most common form is as a powder or a tablet. US Coast Guard-approved oral rehydration salts (ORS) come in a 27.9g packet which dissolves in 1 Liter of water (a Nalgene). PediaLyte comes in both powder (1 packet for 8oz of water) and liquid form. There is no stated maximum daily dose of electrolytes. Use as directed.

GLUCOSE – (ORAL GLUCOSE, ICING, HONEY)

Glucose is used to treat reactions caused by reduced blood glucose (simple sugar) levels. Insta-Glucose is a monosaccharide (simple sugar) which works quickly by raising the glucose level in the blood.

USES

Glucose is typically administered orally. It should be smeared on the gums of the lower lip (where chewing tobacco goes). This enables the sugar to be absorbed into the bloodstream within seconds rather than waiting for the system to digest it if swallowed. Glucose may also be administered rectally.

CONTRAINDICATIONS

There are no contraindications for administering glucose, although it is not recommended for children under 3. If symptoms of hypoglycemia do not improve within 10 minutes, administer another tube (31g).

DOSAGES

This medication typically comes in either gel or tablet form. An entire tube of Insta-Glucose (31mg) or cake icing should be given; administer additional tubes if necessary. There is no maximum recommended dosage. Use as directed.

LOPERAMIDE – (IMODIUM, MAALOX)

Loperamide is typically used to control diarrhea. It acts by increasing the amount of time substances stay in the intestine, allowing more water to be absorbed from fecal matter. It also suppresses the gastrocolic reflex, decreasing bowel movements.

USES

Loperamide is used against diarrhea. Drink extra water while you are taking this medication to keep from becoming dehydrated. It may be up to 48 hours before you notice any symptom improvement.

CONTRAINDICATIONS

The use of Loperamide in children under age 2 is not recommended. Use should be stopped in the presence of bloody stool (dysentery) or fever. Loperamide may not help for Cholera, Shigella, or Campylobacter.

DOSAGES

This medication typically comes in tablet form (2mg) which may work for up to 12 hours. Loperamide also exists in Liquid form. The maximum recommended dose per 24-hour time period for an adult is 16mg. Use as directed.

ACTIVATED CHARCOAL – (ACTIDOSE)

Activated Charcoal is a black pudding or toothpaste-like substance administered to those who have been poisoned or have ingested toxins. The activated charcoal acts as a binding agent to which the toxins adhere. They are then passed through the digestive system. Unlike syrup of ipecac (which causes vomiting), activated charcoal filters out many harmful drugs and poisons without causing internal damage. Activated charcoal has now replaced ipecac and stomach pumping in most hospitals and clinics.

USES

Activated charcoal should be given to those who have ingested poisons or toxins. Dosage is 1 gram/kg; most adults take two entire bottles of Activated charcoal (30g to 50g). Children may also take this medication but in smaller doses (use as advised by Poison Control, your physician, or pharmacist). Side effects (most commonly seen only with prolonged use) may include black stool, black tongue, vomiting, diarrhea and/or constipation.

CONTRAINDICATIONS

There are no significant contraindications to activated charcoal, however it is not recommended to take any medications used for constipation (sorbitol, magnesium citrate, etc.), as this can cause electrolyte imbalances and other problems. It may also reduce or prevent the absorption of certain drugs such as acetaminophen, and several prescription medications. Contact Poison Control prior to administering if you have any questions or concerns about doing so.

DOSAGES

This medication typically comes in 15g, 25g and 50g bottles or tubes. There is no maximum recommended dosage. Use as directed.