

# How to use medicines correctly

## How do I buy medicines in Australia?

There are 2 ways to buy medicines in Australia:

- > From your doctor, for prescription medicines.
- > From a pharmacy, for over-the-counter medicines.

### Prescription medicines

You can only get some medicines with a piece of paper from your doctor, known as a “prescription” or “script”. This prescription tells the pharmacy what medicine you need and how you should use it.

To get your medicine, take the prescription to any pharmacy. Take your Medicare Card or Health Care Card with you because these can often get you a discount. If you are an asylum seeker, you may need to go to a specific pharmacy to get your medicine.

If you need to take the medicine for a long time, the doctor might give you a “repeat” of a prescription. This means that you can buy the medicine again using the same prescription without visiting your doctor again.

Prescription medicines are **ONLY** for the person whose name is on the prescription. It can be dangerous for other people to use them.

Dr. A Practitioner  
99 Station Street  
Central NSW 2001  
Phone: (99) 9999 9999  
Prescriber no.: 123456

Patient's Medicare no.: 3900724651-1

Pharmaceutical benefits endorsement number:  Safety Net entitlement card holder (unless relevant box)  Concessional or dependent RPBS beneficiary or Safety Net (concession card holder)

Patient's name: Mast John Citizen  
Address: 1 Station Street  
Central NSW 2001

Date: 03/04/07  
PBS  RPBS  Brand substitution not permitted

Medicare Australia / DVA

**NEMDYN EAR OINTMENT 10g**  
**APPLY TOPICALLY TO SORES**  
**IN NOSTRIL TDS**

Qty: 1 0 repeat  
1 Item

Dr. A Practitioner  
MBBS

*A Practitioner*

Please turn over for privacy note

I certify that I have received this medication and the information relating to any entitlement to free or concessional pharmaceutical benefits is not false or misleading.

Date of supply: \_\_\_\_\_ Patient's or agent's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Agent's address: \_\_\_\_\_ 4004 110000

An example of a prescription in Australia

It is important to keep taking prescription medicines until your doctor or pharmacist tells you to stop, even if you are feeling better.

It is important to tell every doctor or nurse you see what medicines you are taking. Also tell them if there is a medicine that makes you sick. If you don't tell all doctors this information, they might give you new medicine which will not work properly with the medicine you are already taking.

If you take vitamins, supplements, herbal or traditional medicines, tell you your doctor, nurse or pharmacist. Sometimes these can make the medicines your doctor gives you not work properly or cause problems for your health.

## How do I take medicines correctly?

All medicines have a label.

The label tells you how to use the medicine safely, including:

- How much to use
- When to use it
- How many times a day you should use it
- How many days you should use it for

## Over-the-counter medicines

You can buy medicines without a prescription. These are called “over the counter” medicines. You can buy these medicines at pharmacies and other shops like supermarkets.

Examples of over-the-counter medicines:

- Cough, cold and flu medicines
- Pain medicines like aspirin, acetaminophen, and ibuprofen
- Medicines for sore throat, headache, earache, and body aches
- Eye drops
- Medicines for diarrhoea and constipation

The image shows a detailed medicine label for NyQuil. The label is divided into several sections:

- Do Not Use:** If pouch is broken or torn.
- Failure to follow these warnings could result in serious consequences.**
- Drug Facts:**
  - Active ingredients (in each LiquiCap):** Acetaminophen 325 mg (Pain reliever/fever reducer), Dextromethorphan HBr 15 mg (Cough suppressant), Doxylamine succinate 6.25 mg (Antihistamine).
  - Uses:** Temporarily relieves common cold/flu symptoms: cough due to minor throat & bronchial irritation, sore throat, headache, minor aches & pains, fever, runny nose & sneezing.
  - Warnings:** Liver warning: This product contains acetaminophen. Severe liver damage may occur if you take more than 4 doses in 24 hrs, which is the maximum daily amount for this product. Do not use with any other drug containing acetaminophen (prescription or nonprescription). If you are not sure whether a drug contains acetaminophen, ask a doctor or pharmacist. Do not use if you are now taking a prescription monoamine oxidase inhibitor (MAOI) (certain drugs for depression, psychiatric or emotional conditions, or Parkinson's disease), or for 2 weeks after stopping the MAOI drug. If you do not know if your prescription drug contains an MAOI, ask a doctor or pharmacist before taking this product. Do not use to make a child sleep.
  - Ask a doctor before use if you have:** liver disease, glaucoma, cough that occurs with too much phlegm (mucus), a breathing problem or chronic cough that lasts or as occurs with smoking, asthma, chronic bronchitis or emphysema, trouble urinating due to enlarged prostate gland.
  - Ask a doctor or pharmacist before use if you are:** taking sedatives or tranquilizers, taking the blood thinning drug warfarin.
  - When using this product:** Do not use more than directed. Excitability may occur, especially in children. Marked drowsiness may occur. Be careful when driving a motor vehicle or operating machinery. Alcohol, sedatives, & tranquilizers may increase drowsiness.
  - Stop use and ask a doctor if:** pain or cough gets worse or lasts more than 7 days, fever gets worse or lasts more than 3 days, redness or swelling is present, new symptoms occur, cough comes back or occurs with rash or headache that lasts. These could be signs of a serious condition.
  - If pregnant or breast-feeding, ask a health professional before use.**
  - Keep out of reach of children. Overdose warning:** Taking more than the recommended dose can cause serious health problems. In case of overdose, get medical help or contact a Poison Control Center right away. Quick medical attention is critical for adults as well as for children even if you do not notice any signs or symptoms.
- Directions:**
  - Take only as directed - see Overdose warning.
  - Do not exceed 4 doses per 24 hours.
  - Adults & children 12 yrs & over: 2 LiquiCaps with water every 6 hrs.
  - Children 4 to under 12 yrs: ask a doctor.
  - Children under 4 yrs: do not use.
- Other information:**
  - When using other DayQuil or NyQuil products, carefully read each label to ensure correct dosing.
  - Store at room temperature.
- Inactive ingredients:** DSC Yellow No. 10, FD&C Blue No. 1, gelatin, glycerin, polyethylene glycol, povidone, propylene glycol, purified water, sorbitol sorbitan solution, titanium dioxide.
- Questions? 1-800-251-3374**
- www.vicks.com**
- PARENTS:** See the back of the box for more information. [www.DoNotUseItAgain.org](http://www.DoNotUseItAgain.org)
- Do Not Use:** If pouch is broken or torn.
- TO OPEN:** PUSH IN TAB AND PULL OUT.
- See Full Drug Facts information on the back of this dispenser.**
- Product repackaged and distributed with permission of the manufacturer by:** JC World Ball Wholesale Company, Inc. Hackensack, NJ 07601
- Barcode:** 9 10371 72402 6
- 25 PACKETS OF 2 LiquiCaps®**

An example of a medicine label with instructions

It is very important to take medicines as it says on the label.

Take the medicine for as long as suggested.

Do not take more or less medicine than what is on the label or your pharmacist has told you.

***Medicines can help you get better when you are sick, but if you do not take them correctly, they can hurt you.***

Do not give any of your medicine to other people and don't take another person's medicine.

A medicine that is good for someone else might not work for the illness you have and may make it worse.

Antibiotics are very strong medicines. You should only taken them if your doctor tells you to. They can have serious side effects if you don't take them properly.

Some medicines can cause side effects. Side effects may be mild, like an upset stomach, or they can be more serious, like damage to your liver.

If you notice that something is wrong with you, speak to your doctor or pharmacist. Ask for an interpreter if you need one. Interpreters are free.



An example of antibiotics

## What is a generic medicine?

Sometimes you can choose between a "generic" medicine and a brand name medicine.

Generic and brand name medicines work the same way. Generic medicine usually costs less.

If there is a generic option for the medicine you need, your pharmacist may ask you if you would like the 'generic' medicine instead of the brand name medicine.

If the pharmacist doesn't ask you, you can ask if they have a generic brand (a less expensive brand) of the medicine you need.



Brand



Generic

## Ask questions to make sure you understand your medicines

Ask your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist questions to be sure you understand how to use your medicine.

To use medicines safely, you need to know:

- › What the medicine is
- › Why you are using the medicine
- › How and when to use the medicine
- › If there are any medicines you shouldn't use with this one

If you forget how to use your medicine or if you don't understand the information on the label, you can ask a pharmacist for help.

## How do I store my medicines correctly?

Medicines that are stored correctly last longer and work better.

- › Put your medicines in a safe place, away from children and pets.
- › Store your medicines in a cool, dry place. Places that are damp and warm, like the kitchen or bathroom can damage your medicines.

- › Keep medicines in their original containers, as they have the instructions on the label.
- › Some medications need refrigeration. This is normally written on the label.
- › Throw away expired medicines and medicines you no longer use.

## How do medicines work?

- › Some medicines work quickly and others take time. For example, some pain killers (called analgesics) may take a few minutes to treat the pain, but antibiotic tablets may take more than 24 hours before you notice an infection improving, antidepressants can typically take two weeks before you notice an improvement in mood.
- › If you are worried your medicines are not working or that your health is getting worse, you should see your doctor immediately.
- › Some medicines work best on an empty stomach or can irritate the stomach so these are best taken with food.