

## A Short Note on Over-the-Counter Drugs

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### ABOUT THE STUDY

Over-the-Counter (OTC) drugs are those that may be acquired without a prescription. Some over-the-counter medications ease aches, pains, and itches. Some are used to prevent or treat illnesses such as tooth decay and athlete's foot. Others aid in the treatment of persistent issues such as migraines and allergies.

In the United States, the Food and Drug Administration determines whether a drug is safe and effective enough to be sold over the counter. This allows you to play a more active part in your health treatment. However, precautions are to be taken to minimize errors. Taking Over-The-Counter medications still has risks:

- The medications may interfere with other medications, supplements, meals, or beverages.
- Some medications are not appropriate for those who have specific medical problems. Certain decongestants, for example, should not be used by patients with high blood pressure.
- Some people are allergic to specific medications.
- Many medications are not safe to use while pregnant.
- OTC medications should not be taken for longer or in larger dosages than recommended on the label.

### R<sub>x</sub>-to-OTC switch

Many OTC medications have undergone a prescription to Over-the-Counter switch, often known as an "R<sub>x</sub>-to-OTC switch," which means they were previously exclusively accessible with a prescription but are now available without one. Proton-pump inhibitors like esomeprazole (Nexium 24 hr) and stomach acid blockers like famotidine (Pepcid AC), both used to treat heartburn, are examples of R<sub>x</sub> to OTC medications. The emergency contraceptive pill (often known as the morning after pill), is now accessible without a prescription and may be purchased on the shelves of many pharmacies.

Even though they do not require a prescription, Over-the-Counter drugs might pose a danger. Excessive dosages have the potential to cause negative effects, medication interactions, and injury. Users should closely examine the "Drug Facts" label available on all OTC products. Pregnant women should consult their doctor before taking any drug, vitamin, or herbal supplement, even if it is available over the counter.

OTC drugs, including herbal treatments, can help with symptom control but cannot cure a cold; instead, they can potentially reduce the symptoms that cause patients to suffer. Herbs have been used for generations to treat cold symptoms, but scientific studies have yet to show their efficacy. While herbal medicines may be beneficial to some people, it is important to keep in mind that they are not without risk and may interfere with prescription medications.

### CONCLUSION

Patients frequently see a pharmacist rather than a doctor for minor symptoms such as a cough, cold, allergies, discomfort, fever, acidity, diarrhoea, and skin disorders. The purchase of specified drugs over-the-counter is permitted in the majority of nations. Over-the-Counter (OTC) medicines refer to pharmaceuticals that are legally permitted to be sold by pharmacists without a prescription. In India, there is no legal meaning for the phrase. Unless clearly indicated as a prescription only medicine, pharmaceuticals are technically OTC. OTC medications facilitate faster and less expensive access to healthcare; however, their misuse and adverse health impacts raise concerns.

To optimise the use of OTC medications in India, a legally recognised category of OTC medicines, patient awareness initiatives, and the participation of pharmacists and pharmaceutical corporations are necessary. Some of these drugs contain components that have the potential for abuse when taken in ways that are not authorised for the prescription or at higher than recommended quantities. This might involve combining many drugs to obtain the desired effect or taking them in a different method or at a larger dose than advised on the packaging.

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