



Managing over-the-counter medications with kidney disease

When you're living with kidney disease, it is important to understand how medications may impact your kidney health. Over-the-counter (OTC) medications are medications you can buy without a prescription at the store. They're used to help treat different illnesses and symptoms like headaches, allergies, and heartburn.

Below is a list of common OTC medications and the impact they may have on your kidneys. Remember to keep your doctor and care team aware of any medications you are taking.

TYPE OF MEDICATION AND USES	COMMON BRAND NAMES	THINGS TO CONSIDER
Pain medications for aches, fever, inflammation, and pains	Tylenol and NSAIDs (nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs) such as Advil, Aleve, Alka-Seltzer, Motrin	While Tylenol is generally safe to use, NSAIDs such as aspirin can cause kidney injury and should be avoided. NSAIDs are found in many medications for cold and flu so check the label for aspirin, ibuprofen, or naproxen.
Antacids for acid reflux, heartburn, and upset stomach	Maalox, Mylanta, Nexium, Pepcid AC, Prevacid, Prilosec, Tums	Your kidneys may not be able to get rid of the extra aluminum, magnesium, and sodium in Maalox and Mylanta. Limit taking antacids to no more than 2 weeks. If you're on dialysis, you may not be able to take some of these medications so talk to your doctor.
Decongestants for allergies or cold symptoms, like stuffy nose	Afrin, Ayr, Flonase, Sudafed, Sudafed PE	Decongestants can increase blood pressure and cause your heart and kidneys to work too hard. Saline nasal sprays (Ayr) are safer alternatives for people living with kidney disease to other nasal sprays (Afrin, Flonase) or oral decongestants (Sudafed, Sudafed PE).
Allergy medications (antihistamines) for sneezing, itching, and runny nose	Allegra, Benadryl, Claritin, Zyrtec	Benadryl causes more drowsiness compared to Allegra, Claritin, and Zyrtec. These medications require dose adjustment, so talk to your doctor before taking one. Avoid products with a "D" in the name such as Allegra-D as they contain a decongestant.

MANAGING MEDICATIONS

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Medications for diarrhea	Imodium A-D, Kaopectate, Pepto Bismol	Imodium A-D is considered safe for people with kidney disease if used for no more than 48 hours. Avoid Kaopectate and Pepto Bismol since they may further harm your kidneys.
Medications for constipation	Colace, Dulcolax, Metamucil, MiraLAX	Colace, Dulcolax, and Metamucil are generally safe for people with kidney disease. MiraLAX must be taken with a full glass of water, so it is not recommended for people on dialysis who have a fluid restriction. Talk to your doctor if you use any of these medications for more than 7 days.
Sleep aids for sleeplessness	Melatonin, Unisom	It is okay to use an occasional sleep aid but drowsiness is expected. Talk to your doctor before trying a new treatment for insomnia.
Cough suppressants for temporary relief of the urge to cough	Delsym, Mucinex, Robitussin	These medications are generally safe for people with kidney disease. Talk to your doctor if your cough does not improve within 7 days, or if you have a headache, fever, or rash.
Motion sickness medications for nausea, vomiting, and dizziness	Bonine, Dramamine, Medi-Medlazine	Use only as needed. People 65 years or older are at a higher risk of developing confusion, dry mouth, and constipation from these medications.



MEDICATION SUPPORT TO HELP YOU THRIVE

Specially trained pharmacists, like those at FreseniusRx, understand medications and kidney disease and can answer any questions. Talk to your care team or call 1-800-947-3131 to learn how many of your medications may be conveniently delivered to you.