Over-the-counter drugs are often used to help alleviate symptoms associated with colds, flu, and other illnesses. This brochure contains a list of commonly used medications and their functions. Before taking any over-the-counter products the following tips are advised: read the package insert, take product as directed, and contact a pharmacist or health care provider with any questions.

### Pain Relievers
Reduce general achiness, headache, and fever.

- Acetaminophen (e.g., Tylenol) is a painkiller and fever reducer. Does not irritate the stomach. Safe for people allergic to aspirin. Do not exceed 3000mg a day.
- Aspirin is a painkiller, fever reducer, and anti-inflammatory with few side effects. May cause stomach irritation so take with food. Not recommended for those under age 19 due to association with Reye’s syndrome.*
- Ibuprofen (e.g., Advil, Motrin) is a painkiller, fever reducer, and anti-inflammatory. May irritate stomach so take with food.
- Naproxen Sodium (e.g., Aleve) is a painkiller, fever reducer, and anti-inflammatory. Pain relief lasts 8-12 hours, about twice as long as other painkillers. May irritate stomach so take with food.

### Antihistamines
Dry the mucus membranes and help ease a runny nose (e.g., Benadryl, Allegra, Zyrtec, Claritin).

- May cause dryness in the nose and mouth.
- May cause drowsiness. (primarily Benadryl)
- Should not be used while driving or operating machinery.

- Nasal drops/sprays should not be used for more than 2-3 consecutive days as they may actually increase congestion (“rebound effect”).
- Must be 18 years or older to buy most products containing pseudoephedrine. These products are located behind the counter in the pharmacy.

### Cough Expectorants
Help loosen phlegm and mucus (e.g., products containing guaifenesin such as Mucinex).

- May help make coughs more productive.
- Used for “wet” coughs.

### Cough Suppressants
Reduce sensitivity to the cough reflex resulting in less coughing (e.g., products containing dextromethorphan).

- Good for coughs that prevent sleeping.
- Used for dry, tickly coughs.

### Lozenges and Throat Sprays
Provide temporary relief of sore throat pain (e.g., Chloraseptic, Cepastat, Halls).

- Lozenges should be dissolved slowly in the mouth, not chewed.
- Continuous use may cause nausea.

- Avoid all-in-one products; it is best to use a medicine targeting a specific symptom.
- Read all warning labels and be sure to use products as directed.
- Be aware of the drug’s side effects before taking it.
- Use caution when combining medications; contact a health care provider or pharmacist for advice or instructions if in doubt.
- Generic drugs are just as effective as brand name drugs and are available at a fraction of the cost.
- Contact a health care provider if symptoms do not subside.