



Read the labels, again

Any box or bottle of over-the-counter (OTC) medicine lists its active ingredients prominently on the label. But are consumers using that information to make wise choices about taking two or more OTC drugs at the same time? Probably not, suggests a study in the *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*.

A consumer who takes a cold medicine containing, for instance, acetaminophen, may see nothing wrong with taking an additional medicine that also contains acetaminophen. In other words, the typical consumer, who is unlikely to have any medical expertise, may very well believe that there is no danger in taking any two OTC medications at the same time—even medications with the same active ingredients.

Avoid double dosing. OTC drugs are not risk-free. Read labels.

FYI

According to the FDA, more than 600 OTC and prescription medicines contain the active ingredient acetaminophen. Taking acetaminophen is safe and effective when you follow the label information. But you can get severe liver damage if you take:

- More acetaminophen than directed
- More than one medicine that has acetaminophen
- 3 or more alcoholic drinks every day while using acetaminophen

For more information, ask your pharmacist, doctor, or nurse.