

Where's the dose? It's **hidden** under the label!

A man called the pharmacy to ask how to take a cold medicine he had just purchased, **Alka-Seltzer Plus Day and Night** Liquid Gels (see Photo 1). Both blue and green gel capsules were inside the box, but he could not find the directions regarding which capsules to take and how often. The pharmacist could not find the directions, either, so he called the drug company for help. He learned that the directions were "hidden" under a sealed flap on the back of the box (see Photo 2). The label on the box had given him no hint to lift up the corner and peel it back to view the directions for taking the medicine.

The pharmacist called the man back to tell him how to find the directions for use. Two blue capsules are supposed to be taken every 4 hours as needed during the day. Two green capsules are supposed to be taken every 6 hours as needed during the night. The day and night capsules contain slightly different ingredients (see Table 1).

Alka-Seltzer Plus Day and Night is also available in effervescent (fizzy) tablets. The directions for use are "hidden" under a sealed flap for this medicine, too. In fact, the makers of many over-the-counter medicines are now putting some of the information about its drug and how to take it on "hidden" labels underneath the outer

label. In some cases, there are directions to pull the flap up to view the information; in other cases, the consumer is expected to find the directions on their own. If you purchase an over-the-counter medicine and cannot find the directions for its use, inspect the box or bottle to see if the label can be peeled back. If you can't find the directions, or if you have any questions, call your pharmacist for assistance.

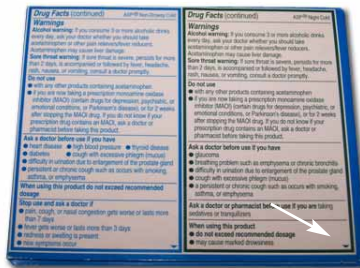


Photo 1 (top): Alka-Seltzer cold medicine. Photo 2 (bottom): This back panel must be lifted up to view the directions for use.

Alka-Seltzer Products	Daytime Medicine	Nighttime Medicine
Liquid Gel Capsules	acetaminophen 325 mg dextromethorphan 10 mg phenylephrine 5 mg	acetaminophen 325 mg dextromethorphan 15 mg doxylamine 6.25 mg
Effervescent Tablets	acetaminophen 250 mg dextromethorphan 10 mg phenylephrine 5 mg	acetaminophen 250 mg dextromethorphan 10 mg doxylamine 6.25 mg phenylephrine 5 mg
<p>Symptoms that the ingredients treat:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ acetaminophen - for pain and fever ■ dextromethorphan - for coughing ■ phenylephrine - for nasal congestion ■ doxylamine - to dry up a runny nose and to aid sleep. 		

Table 1. Ingredients in Alka-Seltzer Plus Day and Night products.

▶ Brand name medicines appear in green; generic medicines appear in red.

60-second safety tip

■ **Medicine doesn't look right.** A mother picked up a refill for her child for **Strattera (atomoxetine)**, a drug used to treat attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder. The capsules were a different color than with previous refills. Even though the prescription bottle said **Strattera 60 mg**, the mother called the pharmacy to check. The pharmacist looked at the child's medicine record and realized that a mistake had been made; an antidepressant, **Cymbalta (duloxetine) 60 mg**, was in the bottle. The mother returned the wrong medicine to the pharmacy in exchange for the right medicine. Luckily, the child had not taken the wrong pills. Always inspect your medicines and, if not what you expect, check with your pharmacist.

■ **Confusing marks on oral syringes.** A child's mother brought a prescription for **Reglan (metoclopramide)** syrup to the pharmacy. When the prescription was ready, the pharmacist showed the mother how to measure the medicine dose with an oral syringe. The mother then realized that she had not been measuring her child's dose correctly for another medicine, **Zantac (ranitidine)** syrup. This prescription had been filled at a different pharmacy. The mother had been given an oral syringe that had two markings for measuring the dose. On one side, the syringe had measurement marks for milliliters (mL); on the other side, it had marks for an outdated pharm-

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Asthma and allergy control through communication

May is **National Asthma and Allergy Awareness Month**. This year's theme, "for life without limits," celebrates the fact that there are no limits on what people with asthma and allergies can do if they work with their doctors to control their symptoms.

Unfortunately, a recent survey conducted by the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America (AAFA) found that people with asthma and their doctors don't communicate with each other well (www.getaheadofasthma.com/pages/Survey2.html). This has led to poorly controlled asthma for many Americans.

The biggest reason that communication with doctors may not be effective is that patients and doctors evaluate asthma control in very different ways.

Up to 90 percent of doctors do not think asthma patients take their medicines properly.

Doctors tend to look at medical information, such as tests that measure lung function and how often a person needs to use a rescue inhaler (for urgent episodes of difficult breathing). People with asthma tend to look more at how asthma affects their daily lives, such as how well they sleep or feel during work or school. Both types of information are important, but no one may be looking at all of the information together.

The AAFA survey included 354 physicians, 585 people with asthma, and 274 mothers of children with asthma. These people agreed that doctors and patients need to work together to

control asthma. However, they agreed on little else, as seen in some highlights of the survey that follow.

- Just 40 percent of doctors felt their patients were good at controlling their asthma, while 77 percent of patients felt their asthma was under control.
- 90 percent of doctors felt that patients don't always take their medicines properly and could do a better job of controlling their asthma; just 39 percent of patients felt the same way.
- Only 11 percent of people with asthma felt their doctors had discussed the meaning of asthma control with them, yet 80 percent of doctors felt they had done so.

While people with asthma may think they are fine, sleeping poorly, feeling tired all day, and making lifestyle changes to compensate for symptoms should not be necessary. Asthma is controllable. It just takes good communication between patients and doctors and high but realistic expectations "for life without limits."

Questions that can help people talk to their doctors about their asthma can be found in an educational program, **Get A.H.E.A.D. of Asthma**, available online at: www.aaafa.org/Getaheadofasthma/downloads/0702_GetAHEADofAsthma-v11-web.pdf.

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acy measure called minims. The mother had been measuring the **Zantac** using the old outdated scale. Instead of the right amount of 3.5 mL, the child had been given 3.5 minims (0.23 mL), about 15 times less than prescribed. The child had received the wrong dose for 5 days but was not harmed. When you purchase liquid medicine from the pharmacy, ask the pharmacist to show you how to measure the dose using an oral syringe, dropper, or dose cup. Then show the pharmacist how you would measure the dose to make sure you understand correctly. Most syringes do not have the older measurement marks on them, but make sure any liquid medicine is measured using the mL markings.

In The News!

Caffeine-loaded energy drinks. According to Simmons Market Research, 31 percent of American teens drink energy drinks; that's 7 million teens. The drinks, which contain heavy doses of caffeine and sugar, can hook kids on an unhealthy "jolt-and-crash" lifestyle. Some of the drinks also contain B vitamins. Taken in large doses, these vitamins can cause a rapid heartbeat and numbness in the hands and feet. There are also some reports that kids are drinking large quantities to get a buzz. Poison control centers have received many calls from young people who are getting sick from too much caffeine. Warn teens about the risks associated with consuming large amounts of caffeine and energy drinks.

Contact Information



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