Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Acetaminophen, Dextromethorphan, and Phenylephrine

This information from Lexicomp® explains what you need to know about this medication, including what it's used for, how to take it, its side effects, and when to call your healthcare provider.

Brand Names: US

Alka-Seltzer Plus Day Cold [OTC]; Comtrex Maximum Strength, Non-Drowsy Cold & Cough [OTC]; GoodSense Daytime Cold & Flu [OTC]; GoodSense Daytime Flu & Severe Cold [OTC]; GoodSense Daytime [OTC]; Mapap Cold Formula Multi-Symptom [OTC]; Mapap Multi-Symptom Cold [OTC]; Mucinex Fast-Max Congestion & Headache [OTC]; Mucinex Fast-Max Severe Cold & Sinus [OTC]; Theraflu Daytime Severe Cold & Cough [OTC]; Theraflu ExpressMax Daytime Severe Cold & Cough [OTC]; Theraflu ExpressMax Severe Cold/Cough [OTC]; Theraflu Multi-Symptom Severe Cold [OTC]; Theraflu Severe Cold Daytime [OTC]; Theraflu Severe Cold/Cough Day [OTC]; Tylenol Cold Max [OTC] [DSC]; Vicks DayQuil Cold & Flu Multi-Symptom [OTC]

What is this drug used for?

- It is used to treat nose stuffiness.
- It is used to relieve coughing.
- It is used to ease pain and fever.

What do I need to tell my doctor BEFORE I take this drug?

- If you are allergic to this drug; any part of this drug; or any other drugs, foods, or substances. Tell your doctor about the allergy and what signs you had.
- If you have a cough with a lot of mucus, a long-term cough caused by smoking or being around smoke, or lung problems like asthma or emphysema.
- If you have taken certain drugs for depression or Parkinson’s disease in the last 14 days. This includes isocarboxazid, phenelzine, tranylcypromine, selegiline, or rasagiline. Very high blood pressure may happen.
- If you are taking any of these drugs: Linezolid or methylene blue.

This is not a list of all drugs or health problems that interact with this drug.

Tell your doctor and pharmacist about all of your drugs (prescription or OTC, natural products, vitamins) and health problems. You must check to make sure that it is safe for you to take this drug with all of your drugs and health problems. Do not start, stop, or change the dose of any drug without checking with your doctor.

What are some things I need to know or do while I take this drug?

- Tell all of your health care providers that you take this drug. This includes your doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and dentists.
- Do not take more than what your doctor told you to take. Taking more than you are told may raise your chance of very bad side effects.
- Do not take this drug for longer than you were told by your doctor.
- This drug has acetaminophen in it. Liver problems have happened with the use of acetaminophen. Sometimes, this has led to a liver transplant or death. Most of the time, liver problems happened in people taking

more than 4,000 mg (milligrams) of acetaminophen in a day. People were also often taking more than 1 drug that had acetaminophen.

- Avoid taking other products that have acetaminophen in them. Check labels closely. Too much acetaminophen may cause liver problems.
- Follow the directions exactly. Do not take more acetaminophen in a day than directed. If you do not know how much acetaminophen you can take in a day, ask your doctor or pharmacist. Some people may take up to 4,000 mg (milligrams) in a day if told to do so by the doctor. Some people (like people with liver problems and children) should take less acetaminophen. Call your doctor right away if you have taken too much acetaminophen in a day, even if you feel well.
- Talk with your doctor before you drink alcohol.
- This drug may affect certain lab tests. Tell all of your health care providers and lab workers that you take this drug.
- If you are on a low-sodium or low-potassium diet, talk with your doctor. Some products have sodium and potassium.
- If you have phenylketonuria (PKU), talk with your doctor. Some products have phenylalanine.
- Some forms of this drug may not be for use in all ages of children. If you have questions, talk with the doctor.
- Tell your doctor if you are pregnant, plan on getting pregnant, or are breast-feeding. You will need to talk about the benefits and risks to you and the baby.

What are some side effects that I need to call my doctor about right away?

WARNING/CAUTION: Even though it may be rare, some people may have very bad and sometimes deadly side effects when taking a drug. Tell your doctor or get medical help right away if you have any of the following signs or symptoms that may be related to a very bad side effect:

- Signs of an allergic reaction, like rash; hives; itching; red, swollen,

blistered, or peeling skin with or without fever; wheezing; tightness in the chest or throat; trouble breathing, swallowing, or talking; unusual hoarseness; or swelling of the mouth, face, lips, tongue, or throat.

- Signs of liver problems like dark urine, tiredness, decreased appetite, upset stomach or stomach pain, light-colored stools, throwing up, or yellow skin or eyes.
- Not able to pass urine or change in how much urine is passed.
- A severe skin reaction (Stevens-Johnson syndrome/toxic epidermal necrolysis) may happen. It can cause severe health problems that may not go away, and sometimes death. Get medical help right away if you have signs like red, swollen, blistered, or peeling skin (with or without fever); red or irritated eyes; or sores in your mouth, throat, nose, or eyes.

What are some other side effects of this drug?

All drugs may cause side effects. However, many people have no side effects or only have minor side effects. Call your doctor or get medical help if any of these side effects or any other side effects bother you or do not go away:

- Dizziness.
- Feeling nervous and excitable.
- Trouble sleeping.

These are not all of the side effects that may occur. If you have questions about side effects, call your doctor. Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects.

You may report side effects to your national health agency.

You may report side effects to the FDA at 1-800-332-1088. You may also report side effects at https://www.fda.gov/medwatch.

How is this drug best taken?

Use this drug as ordered by your doctor. Read all information given to you. Follow all instructions closely.

All products:

- Take with or without food. Take with food if it causes an upset stomach.

Tablets and capsules:

- Some brands of this drug may need to be swallowed whole. Check with your doctor or pharmacist if you have questions about whether your brand must be swallowed whole.

Liquid:

- Measure liquid doses carefully. Use the measuring device that comes with this drug. If there is none, ask the pharmacist for a device to measure this drug.

Powder packet:

- Dissolve 1 packet in hot water. Sip while hot.
- Drink within 10 to 15 minutes of mixing.
- If using a microwave, dissolve 1 packet in cool water. Microwave until hot. Do not overheat. Stir before and after heating.

Pods:

- Do not take the foil off of the pod before using. Place the pod in the brewer. Use at least 8 ounces (240 mL) of water. After using the brewer, the pod will be hot and may drip. Handle with care.
- Sip while hot. Drink within 10 to 15 minutes of brewing.
- Only use the type of brewer that you have been told to use. If you are not sure what type of brewer to use, talk with the doctor or pharmacist.

What do I do if I miss a dose?

- If you take this drug on a regular basis, take a missed dose as soon as you think about it.
- If it is close to the time for your next dose, skip the missed dose and go back to your normal time.
- Do not take 2 doses at the same time or extra doses.
- Many times this drug is taken on an as needed basis. Do not take more often than told by the doctor.

How do I store and/or throw out this drug?

All products:

- Store at room temperature in a dry place. Do not store in a bathroom.
- Protect from heat.
- Keep all drugs in a safe place. Keep all drugs out of the reach of children and pets.
- Throw away unused or expired drugs. Do not flush down a toilet or pour down a drain unless you are told to do so. Check with your pharmacist if you have questions about the best way to throw out drugs. There may be drug take-back programs in your area.

Pods:

- Store in pouch until ready for use.

General drug facts

- If your symptoms or health problems do not get better or if they become worse, call your doctor.
- Do not share your drugs with others and do not take anyone else’s drugs.
- Some drugs may have another patient information leaflet. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with your doctor, nurse, pharmacist, or other health care provider.

- Some drugs may have another patient information leaflet. Check with your pharmacist. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with your doctor, nurse, pharmacist, or other health care provider.
- If you think there has been an overdose, call your poison control center or get medical care right away. Be ready to tell or show what was taken, how much, and when it happened.

Consumer Information Use and Disclaimer

This generalized information is a limited summary of diagnosis, treatment, and/or medication information. It is not meant to be comprehensive and should be used as a tool to help the user understand and/or assess potential diagnostic and treatment options. It does NOT include all information about conditions, treatments, medications, side effects, or risks that may apply to a specific patient. It is not intended to be medical advice or a substitute for the medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment of a health care provider based on the health care provider's examination and assessment of a patient's specific and unique circumstances. Patients must speak with a health care provider for complete information about their health, medical questions, and treatment options, including any risks or benefits regarding use of medications. This information does not endorse any treatments or medications as safe, effective, or approved for treating a specific patient. UpToDate, Inc. and its affiliates disclaim any warranty or liability relating to this information or the use thereof. The use of this information is governed by the Terms of Use, available at https://www.wolterskluwer.com/en/know/clinical-effectiveness-terms.

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If you have any questions, contact a member of your care team directly. If you're a patient at MSK and you need to reach a provider after 5 p.m., during the weekend, or on a holiday, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

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