MEDICINE SAFETY
Building a More Responsible Generation

CADCA®
Building a More Responsible Generation

Over-the-counter (OTC) medicines help us feel better when we are sick and help us sustain healthy lifestyles. However, now more than ever, people are self-medicating at an earlier age. Did you know that some children begin to self-medicate at around age 11 — in fifth and sixth grade? In fact, by the time they reach age 16, approximately 90 percent admit taking OTC medicines on their own.

Community anti-drug coalitions know that OTC medicines — when taken as directed — are generally safe; however, when taken incorrectly, they can be dangerous. Coupled with the philosophy that our society is medicine-driven, self-medicating at such an early age can set a dangerous precedent.

• In 2011, poison centers managed over 260,000 cases of medicine poison exposures involving children ages 6 to 19.¹
• An estimated 58,546 emergency department visits were caused by adolescents self-administering medicines, and 33.9 percent of these visits resulted from an overdose of OTC medicine — about 10,000 per year.²

If not equipped with the knowledge and training to make safe choices, children and young people can make mistakes, and that is where you come in!

Coalitions address their community’s greatest challenges, from combating drug abuse to preventing underage drinking. OTC Literacy, a curriculum created by the American Association of Poison Control Centers and Scholastic, with support from McNeil Consumer Healthcare, provides an opportunity for you to be proactive. This program raises awareness about the safe use of OTC medicine and provides resources to better equip educators, school nurses and families with knowledge about OTC medicines and responsible use. Its goal is to influence behavior before children start self-medicating.

Medicine Safety: Building a More Responsible Generation is a utility guide that will help you integrate OTC Literacy into your prevention work. Here is what you will find:

Curriculum Overview: Introduces OTC Literacy components.

Medicine Safety and the Logic Model: Provides a primer on how the logic model can be used to plan and implement medicine safety strategies.

OTC Literacy Promotional Toolbox: Supplies the tools to promote OTC safe use messages among your constituents.

Additional Resources: Includes links to other OTC medicine safe use resources.

This curriculum has been distributed to over 100,000 educators with outstanding results.

Curriculum Overview

Early Education + Prevention = Better Outcomes.

Does this formula sound familiar? That’s because as prevention practitioners, we know that the earlier children are educated about OTC medicine safe use, the better the possibility that they could practice safe medicine-taking behaviors later on. Additionally, teaching children and families about OTC medicine safety can lead to respecting the importance of using all medicines—both OTC and prescription—in a safe manner.

OTC Literacy presents these medicine safe use messages in a variety of ways. It is a comprehensive program for fifth- and sixth-grade educators and parents that combines assessment quizzes, interactive lesson plans, student printables and at-home resources. The current curriculum has materials for teachers, school nurses and families/caregivers. In October 2014, there will also be community/public health leader resources for application out of the schools. Here is a snapshot of the program.

OTC Literacy Snapshot

GOAL
Raise awareness about OTC medicine safe use so children and young people adopt responsible, medicine-taking behaviors.

BY...
Acknowledging that children as young as 11 to 12 years old are consistently becoming more responsible for taking their own medicines.

AND...
Supplying age-appropriate messages and interactive lessons and activities that reinforce the importance of medicine safety.

AND...
Providing resources to better equip educators, school nurses, community leaders and families so they can educate and inform tweens about appropriate medicine-taking behaviors.

MESSAGING...
Tween lessons
1. How to read medicine directions.
2. Follow label directions.
3. Properly measure medications.
4. Safely store medications away from younger children.
5. Consult with a parent or trusted adult before taking medications.

RESULTS...
Facilitate conversations about OTC safe use, healthy medicine adherence practices and ultimately the creation of a more responsible, medicine-taking generation.
OTC Literacy for Families

About the Curriculum
To be disseminated through the schools to parents and caregivers, the curriculum asks, “Did you know that there may be over-the-counter medicine dangers in your home that could harm your children?” In response, OTC Literacy helps families learn why it is important to inspect the home for OTC medicine hazards and assist them in acquiring skills to make the home, medicine-safe for the entire family.

A. OTC Literacy for Families: Introduces the OTC Literacy for Families Newsletter, informational sheets and at-home activities, the medicine safety checklist and more. http://www.scholastic.com/OTCLiteracy/parents/index.htm


D. Digital Flipbook – Oh No! Not Another Science Fair Project: In this original story, Asha and her friends Rebecca and Nicky team up to plan an awesome science fair project. Along the way, they find themselves making surprising choices about science and medicine safety. http://www.scholastic.com/otcliteracy/storybook/

OTC Literacy for Teachers

About the Curriculum
Supplies a critical approach to educating fifth- and sixth-grade students about medicine safety. The curriculum includes resources and engaging educational activities specifically designed for parents and teachers of tweens to increase knowledge of OTC safety and responsibility.

A. OTC Literacy for Teachers
Introduces lessons and quizzes, educator resources, the digital flipbook, whiteboard images to support lessons and more. http://www.scholastic.com/OTCliteracy/

B. OTC Literacy Educators Guide

C. Understanding the Drug Facts Label (poster)

D. Lessons and Quizzes

E. Culminating Activities for Students
Provides true-to-life scenarios for students to practice what they have learned about medicine safety. http://www.scholastic.com/otcliteracy/pdf/AAPCC_56_CulmPrntbles.pdf

F. White Board Images to Support Lessons
OTC Literacy for School Nurses

About the Curriculum

School nurses have ample opportunities to engage students in teachable moments, from the time students walk into their offices. Empowering school nurses with the task of educating students and their families about the importance of medicine safety makes sense. OTC Literacy for School Nurses makes this task easy because it packages the curriculum, ensuring its relevance to school nurses.

A. OTC Literacy for School Nurses

B. OTC Literacy for School Nurses Newsletter

C. What’s on the Label? (Mini-Poster)

D. Additional Resources
Supplies links to materials targeting families and teachers. http://www.scholastic.com/otcliteracy/
Q & A

Coalition leaders were introduced to the OTC Literacy curriculum during CADCA’s 24th National Leadership Forum in February 2014. The following questions and answers, generated during a workshop that featured this program, will help to position the program into coalition programs and activities.

Q. Did you know that some students are selling OTC medicines so they can buy marijuana? How can we educate students about why this practice is dangerous?
A. We need to acknowledge that marijuana is edging into the dialogue. It is essential that we position the selling of OTC medicine to obtain other drugs as abuse and misuse. The message? “OTC medicines can be dangerous if misused, regardless of whether the seller is actively abusing. Selling these medicines to purchase drugs, including marijuana, can lead to terrible consequences.”

Q. Does this curriculum fit into the common core health curriculum?
A. OTC Literacy supports the common core curriculum and is meant to supplement the lessons in current, middle school classes.

Q. Will there be curriculum targeting high school students?
A. Although discussed, a high school curriculum is currently not available. Check back with CADCA at a later time to confirm the status of this idea.

Q. This curriculum seems to be targeted to teachers. Can anyone teach it?
A. Anyone can teach this curriculum. New resources and tools supporting the curriculum in and out of school settings will be available beginning in October 2014.

Q. How long does it take to teach OTC Literacy?
A. Each lesson plan was designed to take one class period (approximately 40 minutes). There are 4 lessons in the OTC Literacy curriculum.

Q. What happens if teachers want to teach a few of the components and not all of them?
A. This practice is fine. The curriculum’s organization allows for flexibility.

Q. How can I obtain a copy of OTC Literacy?
A. You can access it directly online at http://www.scholastic.com/otcliteracy/.
Integrating the OTC Literacy curriculum gives you the opportunity to be proactively involved in educating your community about the importance of OTC medicine safety. Indeed, engaging your community around this issue is a literacy investment. Take a look at the following Logic Model to obtain a high-level view of how OTC medicine safety could neatly fit into your programmatic structure.

**OUTCOMES**
- An increased percentage of middle schools adopting an OTC literacy module as part of the health curriculum.
- An increase in the percentage of tweens who can correctly read and understand a Drug Facts label.
- Establishing appropriate attitudes and behaviors pertaining to the safe use of OTC medicines.
- Decrease in the number of ER visits and Poison Control Center calls related to OTC medicine misuse or overdose.

**PROBLEM**
- Tweens are self-medicating without adult supervision.
- Thousands of children and teens each year experience health-related problems due to OTC medicine self-administration, misuse and abuse.
- There is a lack of knowledge around the safe use of OTC medicines among tweens.

**STRATEGIES**
- Confirm the status of health-related challenges associated with tween and teen OTC medicine use.
- Integrate age-appropriate messages and interactive lessons and activities that reinforce the importance of OTC medicine safe use.
- Make the connection between OTC medicine safe use and misuse/abuse prevention.

**THEORY OF CHANGE**
When coalitions educate the community about OTC medicine safe use, they help to create a healthier, responsible generation that is medicine-savvy and medicine-safe.

**ACTIVITIES**
- Raise awareness about OTC medicine safe use.
- Engage educators, school nurses, pharmacists, healthcare professionals, public health educators, parents and guardians, older teens, young adults and tweens.
- Provide tweens with concrete instructions on what they need to learn to become responsible medicating adults.
1. Perform community assessments: Provides the questions that need to be asked about OTC medicine use.
2. Engage new healthcare partners: Provides a vehicle to engage pharmacists, ER doctors, pediatricians and other healthcare professionals.
3. Enhance take-back efforts: Gives you more justification for supporting the use of lock boxes.
4. Create another route to substance abuse prevention: Opens additional opportunities to discuss ways to help keep tweens safe from substance misuse and abuse.

Target Audience
Messaging and Activities
Organized by audience, here are messaging and activity ideas for your consideration.

Message
● OTC literacy means being knowledgeable about the medicines we buy off the shelf without a doctor’s prescription. It also means arming ourselves, the students we teach and their families with the tools and resources to help keep everyone safe.
● When it comes to OTC medicines, did you know that some of your students may be self-medicating? Help keep them safe by giving them the information and tools they need to take medicines if adults are not available to help them.
● OTC literacy now can translate into appropriate, medicine-taking behaviors later in life.

Activities
● In collaboration with your school partners, create and facilitate presentations and training on OTC medicine safe use.
● Be sure to incorporate the messaging outlined in this utility guide.
● Facilitate the development of poster contests and other activities that actively engage students in learning about the importance of medicine safety.
● Ensure that the OTC Literacy program and supporting materials are being used by schools in your community.
● Collaborate with the local and state departments of education to promote the inclusion of OTC medicine safety in the health curriculum, with particular emphasis on targeting 5th and 6th graders.
Message

● If patients and consumers have questions about a medicine’s label instructions — whether it is over-the-counter or prescription medicine — you are positioned to provide the answers.

● Being able to effectively read and follow a Drug Facts label is an important step to becoming medicine-savvy and safe, and pharmacists can teach consumers how to attain these skills.

Activities

● Collaborate with local pharmacy schools and your community’s pharmacists to initiate training programs on OTC medicine safety that target teachers, school nurses, families and students.

● Provide information about the program to pharmacy schools for insertion into their Introduction to Pharmacy classes.

● Supply pharmacies with fact sheets, posters, Poison Help stickers and other materials that can be disseminated to consumers when they pick up their medicine.

● Create and promote OTC Sting Operations where students attempt to purchase selected OTC medicines (those that contain dextromethorphan) at grocery stores and pharmacies. Use these opportunities to educate consumers and stores about the importance of medicine safety.

● Confirm if prevention messages or the Poison Help phone number can be placed on pharmacy HIPPA sign-off machines so that when consumers sign for their medicine, they are reminded to, always read and follow the label.

Pharmacists and Pharmacy Schools:

Are continuously improving their ability to gain access to the communities where they’re located. They are perfectly positioned to educate patients and consumers about OTC medicine safety.
Older Teens and College-Aged Young Adults:

Serve as role models for tweens, giving them the opportunity to impart important information to younger people and also reminds them to practice medicine safe use themselves.

Message

- If patients have questions about medicine safe use or label directions, your office is the place to go for answers.
- Consumers and patients need to be told that OTC medicine - should be treated with as much respect as prescription medicines.  
  - must always be taken as directed.
  - containing the same ingredients should never be taken at the same time.

Activities

- Ensure that there are healthcare professionals on your team, including doctors, nurse practitioners and other healthcare providers.
- Support the creation of teachable moments — that talking with patients and families during visits to the hospital and doctor’s office about safe use of OTC medicine is a great way to raise the level of awareness about this issue.
- Place flyers in doctor and dentists’ offices, clinics, hospitals and other healthcare-related locations.
- Generate and distribute Poison Help stickers (1-800-222-1222) through your healthcare network. For example, stickers can be placed on clinic scales, and clipboards that patients sign-in on.

Message

- It’s always important to follow the directions listed on OTC medicines.
- Even though you think you know what the label tells you about how much medicine to take, read it and follow the directions every time, and teach others to do the same!
- Learning how to safely take OTC medicines now will help you establish good medicine taking practices later.

Activities

- Team up with organizations and clubs in your community that reach high school and college students, encouraging them to adopt OTC medicine safety as one of their service projects.
- Partner with local colleges and universities — in particular schools of pharmacy — helping to establish a pipeline of mentors.
- Create and implement mentor training programs, and help ensure that student leaders are eligible for student service learning hours for their involvement in training and outreach activities.

Healthcare Professionals

Are excellent messengers because of their familiarity and frequency of contact with patients and their families.
Message

● With cold and flu and spring or summer allergy seasons approaching, parents and guardians should teach their tweens about OTC medicine safety.

● You can help create a responsible generation. Make sure that they and you
  - READ and FOLLOW the Drug Facts label each and every time.
  - KNOW the dose, and properly measure each dose with the measuring device that comes with the medicine. Regular tea or tablespoons are not the same as these devices!
  - ASK a pharmacist, nurse or doctor if you have questions about OTC medicine — no question should be left unasked.
  - STORE OTC medicines (including medicines, vitamins and supplements) up and away from children after every use.
  - ENSURE that child safety caps are locked on all medicines.
  - REMIND visitors to keep luggage, pocketbooks or anything else that might have medicines in them out of children’s reach and sight.
  - IDENTIFY the active ingredients in all medicines, and do not use two medicines with the same active ingredients.
  - ENCOURAGE your tweens to consult with a parent or trusted adult before they take any medicines.

Activities

● Encourage parents and guardians to program the Poison Help number into their phones: 1-800-222-1222.

● Create and disseminate flyers for distribution at local grocery stores, businesses, libraries, health clinics, hospitals, places of worship and other venues that are frequented by parents.

● Collaborate with local employers, asking them to incorporate the issue of OTC medicine safe use into new employee orientations, brown bag lunch events and health fairs. Encourage employers to insert flyers into employee mailboxes (virtual and in-office).

● Always include OTC medicine in your promotional materials when you describe how medicines should be safely stored and discarded.

● Teach parents how to read and follow the Drug Facts label.

● Offer to create and implement OTC medicine safe use presentations for PTA meetings, drug take-back events and other special activities that attract parents and guardians.
Message

- OTC medicines are those medicines that you can purchase right off the shelf in a drug or grocery store, without a doctor’s prescription. When taken as directed, OTC medicines are generally safe, but when taken incorrectly, they can be dangerous.

- You are becoming a responsible adult and taking medicines - whether they are OTC or prescription - is an important part of growing up. Always
  - READ and FOLLOW label directions on medicine bottles each and every time.
  - FOLLOW dosing directions.
  - PROPERLY MEASURE medicines with the measuring device that comes with the medicine.
  - SAFELY STORE medicine away from younger children.
  - CONSULT with a parent or trusted adult before taking medicines.

Activities

- Collaborate with organizations in your community that work with tweens, such as the Boys and Girls Clubs, Boy Scouts, 4-H Clubs, National Council of La Raza and National Safety Council affiliates — to ensure that they support inclusion of the program inside and outside of school.

- Recruit student ambassadors who agree to be part of your information dissemination team, and reward them for their participation.

- Encourage students to create and display posters, messages and other materials.

- Launch a video production contest, asking students to create videos that portray the importance of OTC medicine safe use. Post the videos through social media and on school and coalition websites.

- Collaborate with tweens on creating a social media campaigns, utilizing YouTube, Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram and Vine.

- Promote youth generated radio and television Public Service Announcements (PSAs).

Tweens

Can serve as the greatest messengers of all as they educate their peers about the importance of OTC medicine safe use.
Even though you may be actively engaged in prescription drug abuse prevention, OTC medicine safe use may be a new topic for you. Here are tools that you can adopt to hit-the-ground running.

**OTC Safe Use Factoids:**
- Supplies facts that substantiate the need for coalition involvement in this issue.

**Social Media:**
- Supplies sample Facebook and Twitter posts that you can use right away.

**Public Service Announcements (PSAs) and Media Clips:**
- Provides 10- and 30-second adaptable PSAs, as well as short taglines that you can drop into products.

**OTC Safe Use Factoids**
- Many children start to self-medicate around age 11 or 12.
- By the time teens reach age 16, approximately 90 percent of them have taken OTC medicine without adult supervision.
- Many believe that OTC medicine is safer than prescription medicines.
- In 2011, poison centers managed over 260,000 cases of medicine poison exposures involving children ages 6 to 19.
- An estimated 58,546 emergency department visits were caused by adolescents self-administering medicines, and 33.9 percent of these visits resulted from an overdose of OTC medicines, about 10,000 per year.
Social Media

Feel free to integrate the following OTC medicine safe use Facebook and Twitter posts. Do not forget that on both of these social media platforms you can add pictures, which increases the likelihood that your posts will be shared and retweeted.

**Facebook**

How have you helped your children battle the cold and flu season? Over-the-counter medicines are often used to help alleviate their red noses and raspy coughs. Check out these tips and resources from Scholastic to help your kids learn about OTC medicine safety. [http://bit.ly/16IBqog #OTCed](http://bit.ly/16IBqog)

Do your kids know the difference between over-the-counter medicines and prescription (Rx) medicines? Talk to your child about OTC medicine safety using these great resources from Scholastic: [http://bit.ly/16IBqog #OTCed](http://bit.ly/16IBqog)

Around age 11, children start wanting to take care of themselves, and parents play a critical role in helping them along the way. Help teach your child about the safe use of over-the-counter medicines. Get all the resources you need on #OTCed for your tween through the OTC Literacy program, and take steps toward OTC medicine safety today. [http://bit.ly/16IBqog](http://bit.ly/16IBqog)


Did you know that by age 16, approximately 90 percent of adolescents have self-administered over-the-counter medicines? Learn how to keep your tween safe when it comes to OTC medicine with these tips and resources: [http://bit.ly/18TMcO8](http://bit.ly/18TMcO8) (Fact source: JAPhA.org)

#OTCed Tip: Over-the-counter medicines need to be treated with the same care and caution as prescription (Rx) drugs. Keep your young ones safe and learn about OTC medicine safety with your child today at [http://bit.ly/1b5KmrC](http://bit.ly/1b5KmrC). #OTCed

**Twitter**


#OTCed Tip: OTC medicines need to be treated w/the same care & caution as Rx drugs. Learn more about OTC med safety: [http://bit.ly/16IBqog](http://bit.ly/16IBqog)


Never use more than one medicine w/ the same active ingredient. Talk with your teen about OTC med safety today. #OTCed [http://bit.ly/16IBqog](http://bit.ly/16IBqog)
Public Service Announcements and Media Clips

The following PSAs and media clips can be pitched to radio and television stations, newspapers, government agencies, schools and your other partners. They can be read, printed or posted on websites.

30-second

Be medicine-safe. Before you take that over-the-counter medicine, ALWAYS:

- READ and FOLLOW the Drug Facts.
- KNOW your dose. Taking too much medicine or taking it too often can cause serious health problems.
- ASK a pharmacist, nurse or doctor if you don’t understand medicine instructions.
- STORE over-the-counter medicines up and away from young children.
- IDENTIFY what ingredients are in your medicine! Never take two medicines with the same active ingredients.

Learn more at [URL] or call [phone number].

Did you know that by the time teens reach age 16, about 90 percent say they’ve taken over-the-counter or OTC medicine without adult supervision? Many start doing this when they’re only 11 or 12 years old! Follow these safety tips to help the next generation grow into responsible, medicating adults.

Make sure they know that

- Using OTC and prescription medicines incorrectly can be dangerous.
- Asking a pharmacist, nurse or doctor if they have questions is right-on.
- All medicines, including cold remedies, vitamins and other supplements, should be stored up and away from young children.

Contact [coalition name] at [URL] for more information.

When you’re sick or not feeling well...

DON’T DO IT ALONE: Always take medicines with a responsible adult’s guidance.

- READ and FOLLOW the Drug Facts label every time you take your medicine.
- KNOW your dose. Taking too much medicine or taking it too often can cause serious health problems.
- NEVER take two medicines that have the same active ingredients, and if you’re not sure ASK a pharmacist, nurse or doctor for help.

To learn more about OTC Medicine Safety, contact [coalition name] at [URL] or call [phone number].
10-second

Treat over-the-counter medicine with the same care and caution as prescription meds. To learn more, contact the [coalition name] at [URL].

Grow a responsible generation and teach them about over-the-counter medicine safe use. Learn more at [URL].

Over-the-counter medicines can be dangerous if you don’t read and follow the label directions. Learn more. Contact [coalition name] at [URL] or call [phone number].

Media Clips

Use these taglines on websites, billboards, bus placards and other collateral.

- Learn The Facts About Over-The-Counter Medicine Safe Use.
- OTC Medicine Safe Use Starts With Me.
- Be Medicine-Savvy And Medicine-Safe — Read And Follow The Drug Facts Label, Know Your Dose. Ask A Pharmacist, Nurse Or Doctor If You Have Questions. Store OTC Medicines Up And Away And Know What Ingredients You’re Taking.
- Become “OTC Literate!” Use Meds Correctly, Store Wisely, Dispose Of Properly.
- Using OTC And Prescription Medicines Incorrectly Can Cause Harm.
In Conclusion

Coalition involvement in OTC safe-medicine use is vital. Your participation is not in response to a problem but to prevent abuse and tragedies before they occur. Next steps?

1. Start now.
2. Talk with your partners.
3. Commit yourself to including this issue and the OTC Literacy curriculum in your programming.
4. Acknowledge the role that you will play in creating a generation of medicine users that knows the value and importance of safe-medicine use.

You will be glad you did!

Additional Resources

Food and Drug Administration’s Understanding Over-the-Counter Medicines:
http://www.fda.gov/Drugs/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/BuyingUsingMedicineSafely/UnderstandingOver-the-CounterMedicines/default.htm
   Helpful information to help consumers understand and use over-the-counter medicines safely.

KnowYourDose.org
   Introduces information about how to take acetaminophen safely. This website contains information targeting pediatric and other healthcare providers.

National Council on Patient Information and Education’s (NCPIE) Tools for Consumers:
http://www.talkaboutrx.org/med_users_tools.jsp
   Resources on how to talk about prescriptions, appropriate use of nonprescription medicines and dietary and herbal supplements.

OTCsafe.org
   Helpful resources for over-the-counter medicine safety.

StopMedicineAbuse.org
   Helpful resources to help parents and community leaders address the problem of teen OTC cough medicine abuse - specifically products containing dextromethorphan (DXM).

PreventRxAbuse.org
   An online toolkit developed by CADCA to help community leaders prevent and reduce teen prescription and over-the-counter medicine abuse.