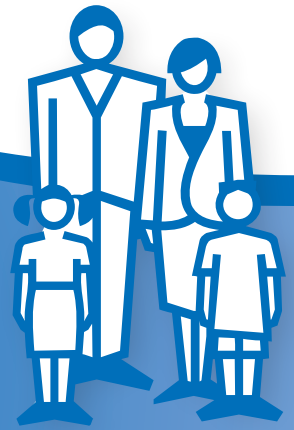


Healthwise

A PERS Health Insurance Program newsletter



WINTER 2011

Over-the-counter cough and cold products: Use with caution

The winter months are here and along with the cold temperatures comes the unavoidable cough and cold. How do we keep ourselves prepared to face the common cold?

There is a wide variety of cough and cold products available over-the-counter (OTC) to help with symptom relief. How do you decide which one is right for you? Before choosing a cough and cold product, it's important to consider any health problems you may have. If you have a health condition you are concerned about, the best thing you can do is to ask for help from a pharmacist or healthcare professional. They can help guide you through the difficult process of selecting a medication for your needs.

Decongestants, such as phenylephrine or pseudoephedrine, are commonly used to get rid of that annoying stuffy nose, but they can potentially make your health conditions worse, especially if they are not under control. If you have high blood pressure, diabetes, heart problems, thyroid problems, and/or an enlarged prostate that are not being controlled by medications, these cough and cold products can be potentially harmful.

Antihistamines, such as diphenhydramine (generic for Benadryl), are common active ingredients in many cough and cold products and can help with symptoms such as a runny nose, sneezing, and cough. Patients with breathing problems (such as emphysema or chronic bronchitis), with glaucoma, and who have trouble urinating due to an enlarged prostate could potentially worsen their condition by taking antihistamines.

Robitussin is another product commonly used to relieve coughing. However, Robitussin is often found in combination with other cough and cold ingredients. Robitussin DM, containing dextromethorphan and guaifenesin (a cough suppressant and expectorant), should be used with care in patients with chronic cough caused by smoking, asthma, chronic bronchitis or emphysema because these ingredients could make the cough worse. Discussing your

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OVER-THE-COUNTER COUGH AND COLD PRODUCTS: USE WITH CAUTION *cont'd from page 1*

health problems and OTC medication choices with your pharmacist or doctor before using these products is the best and safest idea. These medications are not for long-term use and should be used for no longer than one week in most cases. Limiting use to less than a week will also prevent problems that may be caused by other ailments that may be affecting you. If you feel like you need to use these products longer, it may be time to make a visit to your doctor.

It is important to keep in mind that many products contain more than one active ingredient. When choosing a product, take a look at the Drug Facts section on the back of the packaging. Listed there are the product's active ingredients. Make sure you are not

taking additional products already listed on the label. A well-known cough and cold ingredient that causes a lot of problems is acetaminophen (generic for Tylenol). Acetaminophen is commonly used for pain and fever relief and is very effective. However, it can cause a lot of problems when taken in high amounts, especially if you do not realize it is already in your cough and cold product.

When all is said and done, do not risk your health by rushing the decision of which medication to choose for your cold symptoms. If you are ever in doubt about choosing an OTC product, ask your pharmacist or healthcare professional.

Article courtesy of ODS

To PERS Health Insurance Program participants enrolled in the PERS Prescription drug plan for PacificSource, ODS or Providence Health Plans:

If you are covered by an ODS Medicare Supplement plan, ODS Medicare Advantage PPORX plan, a PacificSource Medicare Essentials 801 plan, Providence Medicare Choice Group or Providence Medicare Extra Group

plan, you are automatically enrolled in Medicare Part D and will be receiving a replacement identification card (ID card) from ODS in mid-December 2011.

This replacement card is a requirement of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) for the Part D pharmacy plan.

The replacement ID card contains information that should make it easier for your pharmacy to fill

your prescriptions. As soon as you receive the card, please discard your current card and begin using the replacement card immediately.

If you have questions specific to this replacement, please contact ODS Pharmacy Customer Service at 503-265-4709 or toll-free at 888-768-7509.

For a complete list of brand and generic medications covered under your current ODS, Providence or PacificSource PERS prescription drug benefit, please visit ODS online at www.odskompanies.com/members, or log on to your myODS account and consult the PERS Prescription Drug Plan list of covered drugs. You may also contact ODS Pharmacy Customer Service for additional information at 503-265-4709 or 888-786-7509.

Reducing risks of falling

Even though fall prevention may not be the most exciting topic, it is very important to your health and well-being. Falls are the leading cause of personal injury. Prevent tripping, slipping and falling by taking the necessary steps to stay safe.

Make a list of things to talk to your doctor about at your next visit.

- Write down all medications you are currently taking and have your doctor review the list. Your doctor will be able to tell you if any side effects put you at risk for falling.
- If you have fallen before or come close, log the details and ask your doctor for specific ways to prevent falls.
- Certain eye or ear disorders may increase your risk of falling. Talk with your doctor about them and ask how to reduce the risk of these disorders causing a fall.

Stay active.

- Improve strength, balance, coordination, and flexibility through various forms of light physical activity.
- Always wear properly fitting shoes.
- Talk to your doctor before you begin exercising.

Look through your home for potential hazards.

- Remove everything from walkways and high-traffic areas.
- Use nonslip mats in your shower or bathtub and immediately clean up any water or other liquid spills.
- If you wear glasses, keep them close.

“Falls are the leading cause of personal injury. Prevent tripping, slipping and falling by taking the necessary steps to stay safe.”

Turn on the lights.

- Keep night lights in every room and keep a lamp close to your bed.
- Keep the path to the light switch clear if it is not near the doorway.
- Always turn on the light before using stairs.
- Keep flashlights in places that are easy to find, in case your power goes out.

For a simple fall prevention checklist, go to www.cdc.gov/meandRecreationalSafety/pubs/English/brochure_Eng_desktop-a.pdf.

Preventing a fall will be much easier than recovering from one, and will help you maintain your health and independence as you continue to enjoy life.

Article courtesy of ODS

Part D – IRMMA

PERS Participants:

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has notified the insurance carriers for the PERS Health Insurance Program (PHIP) that a mailing will go out to PHIP members affected by a Medicare mandate called the Income Related Monthly Adjusted Amount (IRMAA) for Part D (prescription drug) services. The mailing is due to go out in November 2011. The Part D-IRMMA may be required to be paid by PHIP members who have a higher income and are enrolled in a Part D (prescription drug) plan. The PERS Health Insurance Program prescription drug coverage can only be offered with a PERS medical plan. The PHIP will not be allowed to offer medical or prescription coverage if the Part D-IRMMA premiums are not paid. If PHIP is notified that the mandated amount is not paid, it will be necessary to disenroll the member and he or she will lose any future opportunities to participate in a PERS Health Insurance Program.

This mandate is part of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, and its purpose is to help fund the Medicare Part D Trust Fund. The program started January 1, 2011, and premiums are not paid to the PERS

Health Insurance Program or any of the PHIP insurance carriers. This premium is a set amount mandated by and paid to the government. This premium is in addition to, and separate from, your Medicare Part B medical premium and your PERS Health Insurance Program insurance premium.

To avoid PHIP disenrollment and to help assist PHIP participants understand whether they will be affected by this mandate, we have posted a Medicare Q&A on the PERS Health Insurance Program website (www.pershealth.com). Please do not call PERS or the insurance companies regarding this mandate; contact information for Medicare is listed below. We are providing the Q&A developed by Medicare for informational purposes only.

The phone numbers to call with questions or websites to visit:

800-633-4227 (800-MEDICARE)

TTY: 877-486-2048

www.medicare.gov

800-772-1213

TTY: 800-325-0778

www.socialsecurity.gov/medinfo.htm

Passport to health

Do you go to sleep counting doughnuts instead of sheep? Have your old high school eating habits sidelined your health goals? Would your diabetes be easier to control with a little dietary tweak?

If your answer to any of these questions is “yes” or even “maybe,” it’s time to get on the health train. Think of your experience in terms of a journey – and not a destination – to feeling better and living stronger.

Diet, exercise and lifestyle choices all can impact how you live with diabetes. But making – and keeping – your commitment is tough. Here are a few suggestions to help you along your journey:

Add super foods to your diet.

- Beans and greens. High-fiber, high-protein beans and low-calorie greens are considered super foods for diabetics.
- Whole grains. Try 100 percent whole wheat bread, brown rice, barley and oatmeal.
- Nuts and berries. Try whole, unsalted almonds, flax seeds and any kind of berries.

- Sweet potatoes. Why wait for Thanksgiving? These are wonderful baked and right out of the oven.
- Whole citrus fruits and tomatoes. By eating the whole fruit, you get all the great fiber, too.
- Lean protein. Dress down your protein sources, cutting way down on sauces, breading and other empty calories and fats.

Exercise portion control.

Read the labels and measure, if you’re just not sure. More times than not, those single-serving bags actually contain more than one serving. Make a measuring cup your new best friend.

Add activity to your daily schedule.

Make an appointment with yourself to get moving. Those extra

steps add up, and pretty soon, you’ll start to look and feel better. If it has been awhile since you’ve done some heart-healthy exercise, check in with your primary care provider.

If you smoke, ask your primary care provider for help quitting. You don’t need to do this alone; support is available, and the end result is so worth it.

Now that you’ve got your ticket to ride, are you ready to leave the station for an incredible journey? There will be bumps along the way, but don’t let a delay or an unexpected stop ruin your trip. Ask for directions, enjoy the surprises and reward yourself with beautiful sunrises. You deserve it.

Article courtesy of Providence Health Plan





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Providence Health Plan

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Bend, OR 97701

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503-243-3880
800-962-1533 (Oregon)
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800-452-1058 (Oregon)
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