

Over-the-Counter Medications

(notes from a presentation by Vaughan Mason)

For notes on the legal aspects of the use of drugs by first aiders, see “Use of drugs by first aiders – guidance notes for trainers” available on www.remoteemergencycare.com/downloads_trainer.php.

1. Aspirin

Brand names	Aspirin, Disprin
Scientific name	Acetyl-salicylic Acid (ASA)
Therapeutic effects	reduces fever; relieves pain; reduces stickiness of platelets
Risks of use or contraindications	Bleeding can be exacerbated by this drug - people with gastrointestinal ulceration should not take aspirin. Use with caution in asthmatics as it will worsen asthma symptoms in a small proportion of cases.
Often in combination with	Caffeine, which potentiates its pain relieving action (available as Anadin, Excedrin)

2. Paracetamol (acetaminophen)

Brand names	Anacin, Calpol, Panadol, and many others
Scientific name	Paracetamol, acetaminophen
Therapeutic effects	reduces fever; relieves pain
Risks of use or contraindications	Can increase the blood-thinning effect of warfarin.
Often in combination with	Codeine (as co-codamol); caffeine and phenylephrine (as Benylin, Sudafed)

3. Ibuprofen

Brand names	Brufen, Nurofen, Advil, Motrin, Nuprin
Scientific name	Ibuprofen
Therapeutic effects	Mild to moderate pain relief
Risks of use or contraindications	Can cause gastrointestinal irritation. Use with caution in asthmatics as it will worsen asthma symptoms in a small proportion of cases.

4. Codeine (“hillbilly heroin”)

Brand names	Nurofen plus, Solpadeine, Co-codamol (all in combination with paracetamol)
Scientific name	Codeine
Therapeutic effects	Moderate pain relief
Risks of use or contraindications	Can cause constipation. Use with caution in the elderly, debilitated or those with certain kidney, lung or bowel diseases. Addictive.

Often in combination with	Paracetamol, aspirin, ibuprofen, caffeine, various decongestants or anti-emetics
---------------------------	--

5. Psuedoephedrine

Brand names	Sudafed (in combination with paracetamol and other active ingredients)
Scientific name	Pseudoephedrine
Therapeutic effects	Decongestant
Risks of use or contraindications	Nervous and cardiovascular stimulant - care in those with pre-existing cardiac conditions.
Often in combination with	Paracetamol, caffeine, antitussives

6. Chlorpheniramine

Brand names	Piriton
Scientific name	Chlorpheniramine
Therapeutic effects	Sedating antihistamine (first generation antihistamine)
Risks of use or contraindications	Causes drowsiness - can help sleep if sleep is disturbed by itching

7. Cetirizine

Brand names	Allertek, Benadryl One a Day, Piriteze Allergy, Zirtek Allergy,
Scientific name	Cetirizine
Therapeutic effects	Non-sedating antihistamine (second generation antihistamine)

8. Motilium

Brand names	Motilium, Motinorm, Costi
Scientific name	Domperidone
Therapeutic effects	Suppresses nausea and vomiting; increases lactation

9. Imodium

Brand names	Imodium, Lopex, Dimor
Scientific name	Loperamide
Therapeutic effects	Antidiarrhoeal
Risks of use or contraindications	Not for use if stools are bloody, black or tarry

Always read the label for cautions, contraindications and dosage information.