



## Short Safety Subject

Short Safety Subjects are provided by the Public Safety Business Center, Fort Bragg, NC. Our intent is to provide safety topics for the purpose of increasing safety awareness and improving safety performance. Additional Short Safety Subjects are available on the PSBC Business Management Web Site at:

[www.bragg.army.mil/psbc-bm/PubsAndForms/ShortSafetySubjects.htm](http://www.bragg.army.mil/psbc-bm/PubsAndForms/ShortSafetySubjects.htm)

### Over The Counter Medications

Flu, cold, or allergy symptoms such as watery eyes, runny nose, coughing, or a general achy feeling, can incapacitate some people to the point that they must stay home to recover. Others push on because they have deadlines to meet, no sick pay, or feel the company will fall apart without them. These people very likely take whatever over-the-counter medicines they feel are necessary to alleviate the discomfort of their symptoms. The typical "cold medications" are antihistamines or decongestants or a combination of both. Unfortunately, the side effects of these drugs can be dangerous depending on the use and dosage. Many non-prescription drugs cause drowsiness, inattentiveness, or impair one's ability to concentrate or make decisions, drive a car, operate machinery, and can slow down your reflexes to some degree.



If you really can't stay home when you are sick, and must take over-the-counter medications, keep these rules in mind:

**Follow recommended dosages:** Twice the dosage won't make you feel twice as good but will make you more drowsy and less able to concentrate. Contrary to popular belief, doubling the dose does not double the relief. Doubling the dosage markedly increases the potential side effects without making a big difference in the symptoms you are trying to alleviate. The dosage on the package is effective and should be followed.

**Don't use combination medicines:** If you need a decongestant, take a decongestant. If an antihistamine is needed, take one, but avoid multi-ingredient products.

**Don't mix over-the-counter medications or use along with prescription drugs:** The side effects of mixing different medications can be severe and are often unpredictable. Individuals who are already on prescription medication should check with their doctor or pharmacist before mixing prescription and over-the-counter medications.

**Read the label:** Many over-the-counter medicines have warnings about such things as operating machinery, driving, and drinking alcohol when taking the medication. Believe the label warnings as they are there for one reason, your safety. Ignoring these warnings can make the effects of over-the-counter drugs even more pronounced, and potentially dangerous.

**Find something that works and stick with it:** Don't change remedies every few days. Side effects usually diminish after a week or so of use. Try new medications over the weekend, so if side effects do occur, they won't jeopardize your safety.

**Don't underestimate the dangers that over-the-counter medications can cause to your safety.  
Consult your physician if you questions or if adverse symptoms persist.**