

SAFE Over the Counter Medications for Transplant Recipients

PENN TRANSPLANT INSTITUTE

The Penn Transplant Institute provides some general rules for patients regarding over the counter (OTC) medications, vitamins and herbal supplements. Transplant medications can be affected by other medications or supplements you may be taking. It is important to communicate all the medicines you are taking to your transplant team including prescription medications, over the counter medications, vitamins and herbal supplements. Use this table as a reference to avoid drug interactions to keep yourself safe and healthy.



► **If you received a heart transplant, ask your transplant coordinator for advice before using any OTC medications.**

Problem	✓ OR X	Generic Medication Name	Common Brand Names
Abdominal Bloating/ Gas	✓	Simethicone	Mylicon®, Mylanta Gas®, Gas-X®, Digel®, Gelusil®, Phazyme®
Allergies	✓	Diphenhydramine, Loratadine, Cetirizine, Fexofenadine, Levocetirizine, Cromolyn nasal spray, Triamcinolone Acetonide nasal spray, Azelastine nasal spray, Fluticasone nasal spray, Mometasone nasal spray	Benadryl®, Claritin®, Zyrtec®, Allegra®, Xyzal®, NasalCrom®, Nasacort®, Nasonex®, Astepro®, Flonase®
	X	AVOID Claritin D®, Zyrtec D®, or Allegra D® (the D is for decongestants, which should be avoided)	
Sneezing, Runny Nose	✓	Chlorpheniramine, Chlorpheniramine and Acetaminophen	Chlortrimeton®, Coricidin HBP Cold and Flu®
Congestion	✓	Guaifenesin	Mucinex®, Robitussin® (plain) Combination products with dextromethorphan are also allowed: Robitussin DM®, Mucinex DM®, Coricidin HBP Chest Congestion and Cough®, Equate Tussin DM®
	X	AVOID oral decongestants like pseudoephedrine (Sudafed®) or phenylephrine (Sudafed PE®) or combination products that contain either pseudoephedrine or phenylephrine (Mucinex Fast-Max®) AVOID nasal decongestants like phenylephrine-containing nasal spray (Neo-Synephrine® or Equate Nasal Spray, Decongestant®) or oxymetazoline nasal spray (Afrin® or Sinex®)	

Problem	✓ OR X	Generic Medication Name	Common Brand Names	Notes
Constipation	✓	Docusate, Senna, Psyllium, Bisacodyl, Polyethylene glycol 3350, Milk of Magnesia, Fiber, Sodium Phosphates	Colace®, Senokot®, Metamucil®, Dulcolax®, Miralax®, Phillips®, Fiberall®, Fleet Enema®	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unless on a fluid restriction, keep yourself well hydrated by drinking at least EIGHT glasses of fluid a day. For colonoscopy preparation, follow the instructions from your doctor.
Cough	✓	Dextromethorphan Note: if you have diabetes, look for a product free of sugar and alcohol.	Robitussin Cough Gels®, Delsym®, Robitussin DM®, Coricidin HPB® Combination products with guaifenesin are also allowed: Robitussin DM®, Mucinex DM®, Coricidin HBP Chest Congestion and Cough®, Equate Tussin DM®, Vicks NyQuil Cold & Flu Relief®	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some combination products also contain acetaminophen. If you are using one of these products, make sure that your daily intake of acetaminophen does not exceed daily dose limit recommended by the transplant team.
	X	AVOID any combination products containing phenylephrine (Sudafed PE Cold & Cough®; Theraflu®; Mapap Multi-Symptom Cold®; Mucinex Fast-Max Congestion & Headache®; Mucinex Fast-Max Severe Cold & Severe Cold®; Vicks DayQuil Cold & Flu Multi-Symptom®)		
Diarrhea	✓	Loperamide	Imodium A-D®, Imodium Multi-Symptom Relief® (contains simethicone)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Notify a coordinator if you have diarrhea for greater than 24 hours or if you also have fever and abdominal pain. Unless on a fluid restriction, keep yourself well hydrated by drinking at least EIGHT glasses of fluid a day and increasing your salt intake.
	X	AVOID any Pepto-Bismol™ product or any product that contains bismuth subsalicylate unless prescribed by your physician		
Low-grade Fever, Joint Aches, Headache	✓	Acetaminophen only	Tylenol®	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You can take up to 3000 mg in a 24-hour period. If you received a liver transplant, DO NOT EXCEED 2000 mg.* Notify a coordinator if your fever rises above 100.4°F. Many combination products contain acetaminophen, also known as APAP. Check the labels of all medications you are taking for pain or cold (prescription and over-the-counter) to make sure you stay under the maximum dose per day.
	X	AVOID oral methyl salicylate or any non-steroidal anti-inflammatory (NSAIDs) medications like ibuprofen (Advil®, Motrin®, Advil Dual Action®), naproxen (Aleve® or Naprosyn®), aspirin (avoid doses higher than baby aspirin or 81 mg), or ketorolac (Toradol®)		
Dry Nose	✓	Sodium Chloride Nasal Spray/Drops	Ocean Spray®	

Problem	✓ OR X	Generic Medication Name	Common Brand Names	Notes
Indigestion	✓	Calcium carbonate, Magnesium Hydroxide, Aluminum Hydroxide	Tums® Rolaids®, Gaviscon®, Acid Gone®, Almag®, Gelusil®, Maalox Advanced formulations®, Mylanta Classic formulations®, Mintox®, Milk of Magnesia formulations such as Phillips Milk of Magnesia®, Rulox® NOTE: Gaviscon® formulations and Acid Gone®, and other alginate containing medications, should be separated from other oral medications by 1 hour to prevent binding to medications, and thereby reducing effectiveness of other medications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you require any of these products for more than 3 days in a row for indigestion, contact your transplant team. • If you are taking medications to treat/prevent HIV or antibiotics, check with the transplant team before starting a calcium-containing antacid. • If you received a lung transplant, check with the transplant team before taking any OTC products for indigestion.
	X	AVOID Alka Seltzer® as it contains aspirin and Pepto-Bismol® products or any product with bismuth subsalicylate		
Heartburn	✓	Famotidine Lansoprazole, Omeprazole, Esomeprazole, Omeprazole/Sodium Bicarbonate	Pepcid AC® Prevacid®, Prilosec OTC®, Nexium 24 hr®, Zegrid OTC®	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you received a lung transplant, call the transplant team if indigestion/heartburn is getting worse and ask before taking any additional OTC medication. • If used, Lansoprazole, Omeprazole, and Esomeprazole should not be taken “as needed”, as they work best when taken regularly.
	X	AVOID Tagamet HB® or Tagamet® (Cimetidine) Do not take any products that contain the ingredient cimetidine as it can interact with some of your medications		
Probiotic	✓	Kefir cultured milk products/ yogurt products may be used as an alternative to probiotic supplements.	Lifeway®, The Greek Gods®, Wallaby Organic®	
	X	AVOID use of probiotic supplement capsules, tablets, or packets such as Lactobacillus acidophilus, Saccharomyces boulardii. Common Brand names include Align®, Activia®, Florastor®, ProBiotic Restore®, Probiata®, Culturelle®		
Motion Sickness	✓	Dimenhydrinate, Meclizine	Dramamine®, Dramamine Less Drowsy Formula®, Bonine®, Antivert®	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caution as these can make you drowsy.

Problem	✓ OR X	Generic Medication Name	Common Brand Names	Notes
Muscle Aches and Pain	✓	Topical Lidocaine, Menthol, Camphor, Capsaicin, diclofenac, or methyl salicylate	Salonpas Pain Relieving Hot Gel Patch®, Aspercreme with Lidocaine Maximum Strength®, Biofreeze Pain Relieving Gel®, Bengay Vanishing Scent®, Tiger Balm Ultra Strength®, Capzasin HP Arthritis Pain Relief®, IcyHot Medicated Patch®, IcyHot Pain Relieving Gel®, IcyHot Advanced Relief®, IcyHot Lidocaine Plus Menthol® (patch or cream), Aspercreme Arthritis Pain Relief Gel®, Voltaren Arthritis Pain Gel®, Flector Patch®, Motrin Arthritis Pain®, Pennsaid®	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topical diclofenac or methyl salicylate should be used for limited durations and should be used at a maximum of 2–3 times daily as needed. • Avoid applying topical diclofenac or methyl salicylate to extensive surface area, any open wounds, or concomitant use with heated pads due to concern for systemic absorption when used in this manner.
	X	AVOID oral methyl salicylate or any non-steroidal anti-inflammatory (NSAID) medications like ibuprofen (Advil®, Motrin®, Advil Dual Action®), naproxen (Aleve® or Naprosyn®), aspirin (avoid doses higher than baby aspirin or 81 mg), or ketorolac (Toradol®)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ketorolac (Toradol®) is not available as OTC, but it is a prescription NSAID that should still be avoided if at a hospital.
Sore Throat	✓	Menthol, Benzocaine	Luden's®, Vicks®, Chloraseptic®, NICE®, Halls®, Cepacol Lozenges®	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you have diabetes, look for sugar-free lozenges.
Sleep	✓	Diphenhydramine, Doxylamine, Melatonin	Simply Sleep®, Unisom®, Benadryl®, Zzzquil®	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you require any of these products for more than 7 days in a row for sleep, contact your transplant team. • If you received a lung transplant, check with your team before taking any OTC products for sleep. • For melatonin, only purchase products that contain “USP verified” on the label.

Preferred ✓ Herbal Teas	Teas to Limit (1 – 2 cups per day)	X Teas to Avoid	General Guidance
Plain black tea (Lipton®, English Breakfast) Most food-type flavorings are fine (such as apple, lemon, mint, caramel) Chai	Green / Matcha (avoid green tea extract) Yerba mate	Bergamot flavoring (Earl Grey, Paris) Chamomile Lemongrass Valerian Hawthorn Rooibos Ginger Turmeric (Curcumin) Cordyceps (Cordyceps mushroom) Dandelion Echinacea (Coneflower, Black Sampson) Ginseng Feverfew	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To the left is a list of which common teas are safe to consume after transplant. • Always avoid herbal “remedies” or other combination herbal products. These may be harmful to your new organ and interact with your medications. • Note that caffeine contained in select teas can cause excess urination. Closely monitor your fluid intake and weight if drinking caffeine.

✓ **Fruits**

Grapefruit
Star Fruit
Pomegranate
Pomelo
Seville Orange
Tangelo
Minneola

✗ **Fruits to Avoid**

AVOID eating fruits, seeds, or juices.

General Guidance

- Because some fruits can interact with your medications, we recommend avoiding some altogether, while only sparingly eating others.
- Be sure to read the label of fruit juices, fruit punches, and iced teas carefully, as some may contain fruits that should be avoided.

✓ **Vitamins and Minerals Generally Safe After Transplant**

A	Ferrous sulfate
B1 (thiamine)	Folic acid
B2 (riboflavin)	Iodine
B3 (niacin)	Lycopene
B5 (pantothenic acid)	Manganese
B6 (pyridoxine)	Magnesium amino acid chelate
B7 (biotin)	Magnesium chloride
B12 (cyanocobalamin)	Magnesium oxide
C (ascorbic acid)	Magnesium glycinate
D (ergocalciferol, cholecalciferol)	Slow-Mag
E	Nicotinamide
K	Potassium chloride
Calcium carbonate	Potassium phosphate
Calcium citrate	Selenium
Chromium	Sodium bicarbonate
Copper	Sodium acetate
Ferrous (fumarate, gluconate)	Zinc

General Guidance

- This is a list of vitamins and minerals generally safe when found in small amounts in multivitamins or other combination vitamin products. Always talk to your transplant team before starting any OTC vitamin supplement. Some vitamins or minerals taken daily may be harmful to you.
- Certain vitamins and minerals, including vitamin C (ex. Airborne®, Emergen-C®), vitamin D, and zinc, may not be preferred for long-term use due to their potential to be “immune boosting.”
- Herbal supplements, diet pills, weight loss supplements, herbal remedies, fruit and vegetable supplements, and plants/herbs in quantities larger than used in cooking should all generally be avoided due to the risk of interacting with your transplant medications and causing rejection or harm to your new organ, infections or side effects. Talk with your transplant team if you are interested in starting any new supplement.
- **Only use products that contain “USP verified,” “NSF certified” or “Made according to FDA Good Manufacturing Practices” on the label.**



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