

# OVER-THE-COUNTER (OTC) MEDICATIONS

(Updated 05/29/2024)

## I. CODE OF FEDERAL REGULATIONS

67.113(c); 67.213(c) and 67.313(c)

## II. MEDICAL HISTORY: Item 48. General Systemic

The use of OTC medication may be acceptable if there are no side effects (localized or systemic), which could interfere with aviation safety and the applicant is otherwise qualified.

## III. AEROMEDICAL DECISION CONSIDERATIONS:

See Item 48. General Systemic

## IV. PROTOCOL: None

## V. PHARMACEUTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The use of over-the-counter medications (e.g., antihistamines, cold medications, etc.), some food and/or nutritional supplements, and concentrated herbal medications may cause drowsiness or other adverse side effects which could be hazardous to aviation safety.

- The following serves as a general guidance for OTC medications.
- Prescription medications may have longer observation times. Follow the underlying condition's medication guidance.
- For specific medication questions for **Pilots**: Contact AMCD or RFS; **ATCS** - Report to RFS, according to 3930.3C.

**A. SIDE EFFECTS\*:** Below are examples of common side effects and how they may be presented on a medication label. Also review the label for [active ingredients, warnings, and dosing directions](#).

CONCERNING SIDE EFFECTS	LABEL WARNING MAY SAY	FOUND IN
Fatigue, drowsiness	<i>"Drowsiness may occur"</i> <i>"Be careful when driving a motor vehicle or operating machinery"</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Anti-diarrheal</li><li>• Antiemetic (N/V)</li><li>• Cough and cold</li><li>• Motion sickness</li><li>• Sleep-aid</li></ul>
Increase heart rate	<i>"Nervousness, dizziness, or sleeplessness occurs"</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Nasal decongestant</li></ul>
Vision disturbance	<i>"Changes in vision may occur"</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Eye drops**</li></ul>
Heart symptoms	<i>"May cause nervousness, irritability, sleeplessness, rapid heartbeat"</i> <i>"May cause serious heart problems"</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Anti-diarrheal</li><li>• Caffeine</li><li>• Nasal decongestant</li></ul>

\* Examples given are not all-inclusive.

\*\* Eye drops may cause blurry vision immediately after use. **DO NOT USE IMMEDIATELY PRIOR TO FLIGHT.** For more information see the [Eye Medication](#) page.

**B. OBSERVATION TIMES:** There are two types used for medication safety:

**1. INITIAL observation time** (also known as “**ground trial**”):

- 48 hours after taking a **new** medication for the **first time**
- If the ground trial time has passed but symptoms or side effects are noted or persist, **DO NOT FLY OR PERFORM SAFETY-RELATED DUTIES.**

**2. POST-DOSE observation time** (also known as “**no fly time**”):

- **Not needed for all medications.**
- **“NO GO” medications** will likely have a post-dose observation time which allows the medication effects to dissipate, reducing the potential risk to aviation safety.
- In general, post-dose observation time is:
  - 5-times the maximal pharmacologic half-life of the medication **OR**
  - 5-times the maximal hour-dose interval if the pharmacologic half-life information is not available.
  - Sample calculations can be found at: [www.faa.gov/go/pilotmeds](http://www.faa.gov/go/pilotmeds)
- **Exceptions with longer initial observation times (where half-life is longer than the dosing interval):**
  - Sedating antihistamine (e.g., diphenhydramine [Benadryl] or chlorpheniramine [Coricidin; ChlorTrimeton]). See [Allergy – Antihistamine & Immunotherapy Medication](#).

**C. TIPS FOR READING MEDICATION LABELS FOR AVIATION SAFETY:**

1. Identify the active ingredient(s). Verify the medication has been previously taken with no side effects. (Single-ingredient products are preferred over combination products because it is easier to spot disqualifying ingredients.)
2. Review the “Warnings” section to identify potentially aeromedically concerning side effects.
3. Read carefully “Directions” of product to calculate any post-observation time to mitigate aeromedically concerning risks, if needed.

For more information, see:

- [Over-the-Counter \(OTC\) Medications Reference Guide - What Over-the-Counter \(OTC\) Medications Can I Take and Still be Safe to Fly?](#)
- [Medications and Flying Brochure – Do Not Issue, Do Not Fly](#)