

Safe Drug Use for the Recovering Addict or Alcoholic

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People in recovery must be especially careful when taking any kind of over-the-counter (OTC) or prescription medications. Many OTC meds contain alcohol or other ingredients that could endanger their sobriety by triggering a relapse. Even physicians not familiar with addiction may prescribe meds that are not safe for the addict/alcoholic. People in recovery must be vigilant in protecting their sobriety. They must read ingredients, ask questions, and use much caution in using any kind of medication. If in doubt about a specific medication, contact your psychiatrist/addictionologist or another knowledgeable person for guidance.

Important points:

- Never take a medication given to you by someone else without knowing what it is. For example, a friend trying to be helpful can inadvertently cause a setback for a person in recovery by giving them a narcotic for a headache.

OTC meds

- Avoid OTC meds that contain alcohol. **Read the label.** These meds are typically liquid cough medicines or liquid cold medications, such as Nyquil. There are several cough syrups available that are alcohol-free, such as Tussin DM.
- Most OTC meds for minor problems are safe. These include topical analgesic, anti-itch, and antibiotic creams, hemorrhoid preparations, antacids, meds for diarrhea and nausea, and throat lozenges.
- Use caution with laxatives and nasal sprays. Overuse of either of these products can cause physical dependence on them. They should be for occasional use only.

Mouthwash

- Mouthwashes contain alcohol and are frequently abused by alcoholics. Look for alcohol-free alternatives. There are alcohol-free mouthwashes available.

Cold/allergy meds

- Cold/allergy meds are a danger to many. When absolutely necessary, choose non-drowsy type meds. Take the med as directed for the minimum time needed.

Sleep meds

- Medications for sleep should only be prescribed by a psychiatrist/addictionologist. Do not use OTC sleep meds, including Benadryl, without approval.

Attention Deficit Disorder meds

- Attention Deficit Disorder is being diagnosed more frequently in adults. At this time, the ADD meds approved by the Ridgeview treatment team are Clonidine, Intuniv, Strattera, Tenex and Wellbutrin. Only your psychiatrist/addictionologist should prescribe an ADD med for you.

Pain meds

- Pain meds are tricky for people in recovery. Most OTC pain relievers are fine—ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), naproxyn (Aleve), Tylenol. These meds are very effective for many aches and pains. There are times when the addict/alcoholic must have stronger pain meds, such as narcotics, after surgery or for a severe injury. If the narcotics are necessary and taken only as directed, this is not considered a relapse. It is normal for this to cause anxiety in recovering people, so it is recommended that the recovering person prepare themselves before surgery when possible with extra recovery support and pre-planning regarding pain relief. In any case, the recovering person should not handle the pain meds themselves. Someone close to the person should keep the med and give it only as directed during the recuperation time. Any leftover pain meds should be discarded as soon as possible. Your psychiatrist/addictionologist should be aware of the situation and be available to offer guidance in the use of these meds. Addicts/alcoholics are not expected to suffer with severe pain, but they must be very cautious with the use of pain medications.

Prescribed meds

- Recovering people need to make sure all of their physicians are aware of their addiction. They should ensure their charts at their physicians' offices are marked accordingly so no one can make a mistake in prescribing meds. When in doubt about a medication, consult your psychiatrist/addictionologist.
- In general, most antidepressants and mood stabilizers are fine and it is encouraged that recovering people take them if they are recommended by their physician. They can actually aid in your recovery by keeping moods stable.

Vitamins and herbal supplements

- Vitamins are safe for use and are encouraged as part of a healthy lifestyle.
- Many herbal supplements are safe, but caution should be used. Weight loss products and appetite suppressants should be avoided. Many cause a stimulant-type effect. Supplements for sleep or mood (such as Kava Kava and Valerian) should also be avoided unless approved.
- Some supplements are recommended. One is milk thistle, which has been shown to help with liver repair.
- Avoid energy drinks, such as Red Bull. These are full of caffeine and cause a stimulant-type effect. Some of the drinks contain small amounts of alcohol.

The following is a partial list of over-the-counter and prescription medications divided into three categories:

- safe to use anytime
- gray area medications (use with caution; before using, consult your addictionologist)
- dangerous medications (never safe to use except in extreme circumstances; consult your addictionologist)

Pain relief/analgesics

<i>Safe</i>	<i>Gray area</i>	<i>Dangerous</i>
<p>Acetaminophen (Tylenol) Aleve Anacin Ascriptin Aspirin BC Powders Bufferin Dolobid Excedrin Goody's Powder Ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) Midol and Midol IB Nuprin Pamprin Vanquish</p> <p>May use "extra strength" of these meds</p> <p>Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory meds (NSAIDs) These include, but are not limited to: Anaprox Celebrex Feldene Lodine Mobic Motrin Naprosyn (naproxen) Relafen Vioxx</p>	<p>Bellergal (contains ergotamine and Phenobarbital) Daypro (can cause a urine drug screen to show positive for opioids) Imitrex Midrin Subutex and Suboxone (buprenorphine hydrochloride) Toradol (can only be used up to 5 days. Can be irritating to stomach lining) Zomig</p>	<p>No OTC pain reliever containing Benadryl (diphenhydramine) – many times indicated as "PM" For example, Tylenol PM</p> <p>Any prescription med categorized as a narcotic and/or a controlled substance. <i>You must ask your prescribing physician what type of medication you are being given!</i></p> <p>These include, but are not limited to: Darvon, Darvocette (propoxyphene) Demerol Fentanyl Fiorinal, Fioricet Hydrocodone Hydromorphone Methadone Opium Oxycodone Soma Ultram (Tramadol)</p>

Laxatives

<i>Safe</i>	<i>Gray area</i>	<i>Dangerous</i>
<p>Metamucil Miralax</p> <p>Stool softeners, which include, but are not limited to: Colace Dialose Doxinate Ducosate Fleet Sof-Lax Surfak</p>	<p>Stimulant laxatives, which include, but are not limited to: Bisacodyl Cascara Sagrada Castor Oil Dulcolax Ex-Lax Senna Senokot</p> <p><i>Note:</i> Use laxatives as directed and for short durations. People can abuse laxatives and become dependent on them.</p>	

Sleep aids/sedatives

<i>Safe</i>	<i>Gray area</i>	<i>Dangerous</i>
Abilify Buspar (buspirone HCL) Desyrel (trazadone) Elavil Geodon Paxil Risperdal Rozerem Seroquel Sinequan (doxepin) Thorazine Trilafon	Vistaril/Atarax (hydroxyzine pameate)	Any controlled substance. This list includes, but is not limited to: Ambien Chloral hydrate Dalmane (flurazepam) Lunesta Meproamate (Equanil, Miltown, Meprospan) Placidyl (ethchlorvynol) Restoril (temezepam) Soma (carisoprodol) Sonata (zaleplon) Any OTC sleep aid, including, but not limited to: Any med ending in "PM" Benadryl Nytol Sleep-Eze Somnex

Weight control

<i>Safe</i>	<i>Gray area</i>	<i>Dangerous</i>
Slim-fast Xenical/Alli (orlistat)	<i>Note:</i> It is best to avoid weight loss products unless supervised by a physician as well as your addictionologist.	Any diet product containing: Amphetamine Benzphetamine HCL Caffeine Ephedra Ephedrine MaHaung Phentermine Phendimetrazine

The following categories of drugs are all considered safe:

- Antacids/gas relief
- Antibiotics
- Antidepressants
- Antifungal products
- Asthma meds
- Dermatological products
- Eye and ear products
- Fever blister products
- Hemorrhoid products
- Medications prescribed to treat medical conditions
- Mouth (including toothache products) and throat products
- Sunscreens
- Topical creams
- Vaginal and urinary products
- Vitamins and iron supplements

Note: Be extremely cautious in using herbal products. They are not well-regulated and may contain ingredients that could interfere with other meds you are taking or could affect your sobriety. Two products to avoid are Valerian and St. John's Wort.

Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD or ADHD)

<i>Safe</i>	<i>Gray area</i>	<i>Dangerous</i>
Clonidine Intuniv Strattera Tenex Wellbutrin	Provigil	All others: Adderall Concerta Cylert Dexadrine Preludin Ritalin

Anticonvulsants (seizure control)

<i>Safe</i>	<i>Gray area</i>	<i>Dangerous</i>
Depakote (valproic acid) Dilantin (phenytoin) Keppra Neurontin Tegretol (carbamazepine) Topamax (topiramate)		

Allergy preparations

<i>Safe</i>	<i>Gray Area</i>	<i>Dangerous</i>
Allegra (fexofenadine) Clarinet (desloratadine) Claritin, Alavert (loratadine) Zyrtec (cetizine)	Actifed (triprolidine) Allegra D Benadryl (diphenhydramine)— only to be used for an extreme allergic reaction Chlor-trimeton (chlorpheniramine) Claritin D Dimetapp, Dimetane (brompheniramine) Tavist (clemastine fumerate) Zyrtec D	

Cough/cold preparations

<i>Safe</i>	<i>Gray area</i>	<i>Dangerous</i>
Mucinex (guaifenesin) Tessalon Perles (benzonatate)	Dextromethorphan — found in many cough syrups, usually ones ending in “DM.” This is safe if used as directed, but is abused by many if taken in large quantities. Use with caution. Duratuss	Anything containing codeine or hydrocodone as an ingredient Any OTC or prescription med containing alcohol, such as Nyquil or Comtrex

Muscle relaxants

<i>Safe</i>	<i>Gray area</i>	<i>Dangerous</i>
Baclofen	Flexeril Norflex Robaxin Skelaxin Use of muscle relaxants should be limited to a short period of time	

Nasal sprays

<i>Safe</i>	<i>Gray area</i>	<i>Dangerous</i>
Aerobid Astelin Azmacort Beconase Flonase Nasacort Nasalcrom Nasonex Rhinocort Saline sprays (Ayr, NaSal, Ocean Mist, Salinex) Vancanase	Ephedrine (Pretz-D) Epinephrine HCL Naphazoline (Afrin, Allerest, Dristan, Duration, Sina-Rest) Phenylephedrine Pseudoephedrine Vicks Inhaler	

Nausea and vomiting/diarrhea preparations

<i>Safe</i>	<i>Gray area</i>	<i>Dangerous</i>
Bonine Emecheck Emetrol Immodium (loperamide) Kaopectate Nausectrol Norzine Octamide Pepto-Bismol Reglan Thorazine Tigan Trilafon Zofran	Compazine Dramamine (dimehydrinate) Phenergan Scopolamine Transdermal (Transderm-Scop)	Anything containing alcohol, such as Immodium A-D liquid, Paregoric, Pepto Diarrhea Control Donnagel Liquid (contains opium) Lomotil (diphenozylate HCL Atropine Sulfate)

Anti-anxiety

<i>Safe</i>	<i>Gray area</i>	<i>Dangerous</i>
Buspar (buspirone HCL)	Seroquel Vistaril/Atarax (hydroxyzine)	All benzodiazepines, which include, but are not limited to: Ativan (lorazepam) Centrax (prazepam) Doral (quazepam) Halcion (triazolam) Klonpin (clonazepam) Librium/Librax (chlordiazepoxide) Serax (oxazepam) Tranxene (clorazepate) Valium (diazepam) Versed (midazolam) Xanax (alprazolam)