

Over-the-Counter (OTC) Cold and Flu Medications for Patients with an LVAD

Over-the-counter (OTC) medications are medications you can buy at the drug store or grocery store without a doctor's prescription to help relieve different symptoms. This guide will help you learn which medications you can safely take, and which ones you should avoid, when you have a left ventricular assist device (LVAD).

Medications for pain, fever, or body aches

- Acetaminophen (Tylenol®)
 - Use as directed, and **do not take more than 3000 milligrams (mg) per day**.
 - Many cold and flu medications contain acetaminophen, so it's important to check the labels for the dose.
- Do not take non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), such as ibuprofen (Motrin®, Advil®) or naproxen (Aleve®).
 - NSAIDs may increase fluid retention (your body holding in too many fluids), blood pressure, risk of heart attack or stroke, and risk of bleeding.
 - NSAIDs can be found in combination products (products that include more than one type of medication). It is important to check the label.

Medications for cough and chest congestion

- Guaifenesin (Mucinex®) for cough and chest congestion
 - Take this medication with a glass of water.

- Dextromethorphan (Delsym®) for cough suppression (preventing coughing)
- Menthol chest rub (like Vicks® vapor rub) for cough suppression

Medications for nasal congestion (stuffy nose)

- Nasal decongestion sprays
 - Nasal spray oxymetazoline (Afrin® or Sinex Severe®)
 - This should not be used for more than 3 days.
 - Nasal saline spray (Ocean® or Nasal Mist®)
- Nasal decongestion rinses
 - Sinus wash (Neti-pot®)
 - Use distilled water, **not tap water**.
 - Follow the manufacturer's instructions for use.
- Steroid nasal sprays
 - A steroid nasal spray does not provide immediate relief of symptoms. It may require several weeks of routine use before it's effective.
 - Fluticasone (Flonase Allergy Relief and others)
 - Mometasone (Nasonex® 24HR Allergy and others)
- Do not take nasal decongestants, such as pseudoephedrine (Sudafed®) or phenylephrine (Sudafed-PE®).
 - These medications may increase your blood pressure and heart rate, and increase stress on your heart.
 - Nasal decongestants are often found in combination products. It is important to check the label.
 - Avoid products that contain “-D” or “-PE” at the end, such as Claritin-D® or Allegra-D®. These contain nasal decongestants.

Medications for a runny nose

- Antihistamines

- Loratadine (Claritin® or Alavert®)
- Fexofenadine (Allegra®)
- Cetirizine (Zyrtec®)
- Levocetirizine (Xyzal®)
- Nasal antihistamine sprays
 - Azelastine (Astepro®)

Medications for a sore throat

- Chloraseptic spray
- Halls®, Cepacol®, Sucrets®, and other throat lozenges (cough drops)
 - If you have diabetes, look for sugar-free products.

Combination products

- Combination products should be used carefully. They may contain medications you should avoid, such as nasal decongestants or NSAIDs. Read the label to make sure those products are not included.
- Examples of safe combination products you can use to relieve multiple symptoms:
 - Coricidin HBP® products
 - DayQuil High Blood Pressure®
 - NyQuil High Blood Pressure®
 - NyQuil Alcohol Free Cough, Cold, & Flu Nighttime Relief®

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