

# Over the Counter Meds and Work

## Not a Great Combination



During this cold and flu season many of us turn to over-the-counter medications for relief. What we may be unaware of is these common over-the-counter medications can cause side effects that could jeopardize our health and impair our ability to perform everyday activities. Some of these side effects can be felt, but others can't.

Side effects you can feel are physical reactions such as dizziness, drowsiness, double vision, headache and vertigo. Those you can't feel, like confusion, depression or slow reactions, usually undermine or alter your perception, attention and judgment. They can be especially dangerous if you're involved in activities that require mental alertness and concentration.

The type of work you do and your work environment can affect your response to or awareness of side effects. Environmental factors such as heat, humidity, cold or exposure to chemicals may alter the effects of certain medications. Patients and physicians need to be mindful of any workplace factors that could aggravate side effects of medications.

### What You Can Do

- Read and heed the warnings on all drug packaging. Don't assume over the-counter medications are safe and won't cause dangerous side effects.
- Choose a non-sedating antihistamine.
- Ask your pharmacist if there are any drug interactions of which you should be aware. Antihistamines and cold and allergy medications may interact with other medications you are taking.
- Take all medications according to package directions. One of every ten hospitalizations occurs because of medication mismanagement.
- Avoid alcohol when taking drugs. Alcohol can compound the negative effects of many medications and can produce heavy sedation when combined with antihistamines.



Please contact Cascade if you wish for further information. The EAP is here to help.

