

## The healthiest medicine chest

Give your medicine chest a checkup and make sure it includes these 16 essential items. By Margit Feury

**Cough medicine:** The best choice is codeine-free, to avoid drowsiness.



**Antiseptic (hydrogen peroxide):** Prevents infection in cuts and scrapes. Can also be used as an ear wash, and as a mouthwash for people with periodontal disease.

**Ibuprofen:** Reduces fever and eases headaches, PMS, inflammation and swelling.

### First-aid tape, gauze and adhesive bandages

**Chewable antacid:** To relieve an upset stomach. Also doubles as a calcium supplement.



**Hydrocortisone cream:** Eases itching and inflammation; brings immediate relief to severely sunburned skin.

**Aspirin:** Relieves headaches, inflammation and swelling. Chewing aspirin at the first sign of a heart attack significantly boosts survival odds.



**Tweezers**

**Non-drowsy decongestant**



**Antidiarrheal:** See a doctor if symptoms last more than a few days.



**Antibacterial ointment**



**Sunscreen:** Wear SPF 15 on exposed skin all year round. Besides preventing sunburn, it also increases effectiveness of insect-repellent creams.

**Reusable hot/cold pack:** For sprains and achy muscles. Cold packs also relieve the pain of first-degree burns when applied indirectly on skin; low-level warm packs help relieve menstrual cramps.

**Thermometer:** Call your doctor if a fever rises above 102°F., which may indicate serious illness.



### Medicine Chest Dos and Don'ts:

- **Do** clean out your medicine chest twice a year, says Pamela Peeke, M.D., M.P.H., assistant professor of medicine at the University of Maryland, in Baltimore. Toss anything that is past its

expiration date, including vitamins and first-aid kits.

- **Don't** keep medicines or vitamins in the bathroom—humidity affects the potency of many drugs. Store them in a cool, dry,

dark place, such as in a hall closet.

- **Do** keep over-the-counter products in their packaging, which often contains expiration dates, dosage and storage information.

To learn more about over-the-counter and prescription medicines, log on to [lhj.com](http://lhj.com) and click on "The Medicine Chest."