



Ask Your Pharmacist

Helping Families Survive The Cold And Flu Season

(NAPSA)—With nearly 62 million cases of the common cold and 95 million cases of influenza reported each year, many families are looking for ways to survive the season.

“During the cold and flu season, November through April, our pharmacists receive countless questions on ways to avoid a cold or flu and selecting the right medications to treat them,” said Teresa Caster, pharmacist and director for Medicine Shoppe International, Inc.

The best way to survive the misery of a cold or flu is to AVOID getting one altogether. Families can protect themselves by:

- **Getting a flu shot every year.** The number one way to avoid the flu is to get a flu shot—even if you had one last year. Flu viruses change each year, and immunity declines over time.

- **Washing hands often.** Since colds and flus are passed through contact with contaminated materials, washing hands helps prevent the spread of the viruses.

- **Relaxing.** Research has shown that stress can influence vulnerability to infection. Get plenty of rest, and take some time to unwind for your health.

- **Taking colds seriously.** Even colds can be deadly, especially in small children and older adults. Infections and complications can arise if a cold virus is untreated.

The unlucky ones who do develop a cold or flu this year will likely be overwhelmed by the vast array of pills, sprays, lozenges and liquids available as remedies.

“With so many cold and flu medications available, many people make mistakes when deciding



which over-the-counter medication to take,” said Caster. “Mistakes can lead patients to prolong their suffering by taking the wrong medication or unnecessary medications.”

Combination drugs, for example, often cause confusion because individuals do not pay attention and also take additional drugs, not realizing that they are overdosing on ingredients that may cause them harm. Families should pay close attention to ingredients in common drugs, and read the labels on drugs they consider purchasing. When in doubt, ask a pharmacist or doctor about which drugs are right for your family's symptoms, especially if combining over-the-counter and prescription medications.

To aid in decision-making with over-the-counter medications, Medicine Shoppe Pharmacies provide a comprehensive drug information database where individuals can find detailed information on thousands of drugs at <http://www.medicineshoppe.com>. Additional health information and a pharmacy locator are also available on the site.