

Infant Cold Medicines Withdrawn

FDA Issues Warning for Certain Anemia Drugs

Treat Yourself During Heart Month

Infant Cold Medicines Withdrawn

The Consumer Healthcare Products Association (CHPA) recently announced the voluntary withdrawal of 15 infant cough and cold medications from store shelves. Parents may access the list at www.OTCSafety.org or ask a doctor or pharmacist.

This withdrawal affects only specific over-the-counter (OTC) infant cough and cold medicines and does not affect any other children's medicines. If you have purchased a medicine on the withdrawal list, ask your pharmacist whether you can return or exchange it.

In a related action, two FDA advisory committees recently recommended that certain active ingredients in OTC cough and cold medicine should no longer be used for children under age six. This is only a recommendation, and the data shows that these medicines are safe when used as directed. Harm from OTC medicines is extremely rare, and when it does occur, it is generally the result of significant overdose or accidental swallowing. Safe use and safekeeping are key in the proper management of all medications.

Parents may lower the risks of using children's OTC cough and cold medicines and maximize their effectiveness by following these guidelines:

- Read labels thoroughly and follow directions properly.
- Do not give oral cough and cold medicines to children younger than two years.

- Never give two medicines with the same active ingredient unless instructed to do so by a doctor.
- Use medications appropriate to a child's age, weight and symptoms. Do not use adult-strength medicines for children unless your doctor advises you to do so.
- Use the correct measuring device.
- Keep all medicines out of reach and sight of children.
- Watch for side effects and reactions to medications. Contact your doctor immediately if you are concerned.
- Call a healthcare professional if you have any questions.
- Keep emergency numbers nearby, including the nationwide poison control hotline at 1-800-222-1222.

Parents can get more information on this and other OTC medication issues at www.OTCSafety.org.



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FDA Issues Warning for Anemia Drugs Used by Patients with Cancer and Kidney Failure

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana has changed its official medical policy statement regarding the appropriate use of certain anemia medications by patients with cancer and kidney failure. This change is the result of Black Box warnings issued for Aranesp® (darbepoetin), Epogen® (epoetin) and Procrit® (epoetin), and the new guidelines are based on Federal Drug Administration (FDA) recommendations issued in April and November 2007.

Black Box or Black Label warnings are imprinted on package inserts for prescription medications when research has shown that a certain percentage of patients taking the drug may experience the serious side effects noted. These warnings are intended to advise patients of the possibility of side effects, though many patients respond well to the medications and experience no difficulties. Black Box Warnings are so named because the warnings are surrounded by a black border.

If either you or a family member is taking one of these medications, please discuss potential serious side effects with your physician. Always consult your physician before discontinuing any prescription medication. A well-informed patient is the best advocate for his or her own good health. For additional information, go to the FDA website at <http://www.fda.gov>.

Treat Yourself During Heart Month

Want to do something sweet for yourself — or that special someone — this Valentine's Day? If so, be sure to keep his or her health in mind. Try making Sweet Heart Shortcake, a dessert that's heart-healthy and just right for American Heart Month. Plus, it's easy, inexpensive and as pretty as a picture on a Valentine's card.

Sweet Heart Shortcake

1. *Cut strawberries in heart shapes.*
Rinse a pint of strawberries. Gently remove the leaves and stem at the top of each berry using a sharp knife. Cut an indentation at center top of the berry, shaping with the knife to form a heart-shaped crown. Next, slice each strawberry vertically to create several thin, flat, heart-shaped slices. (Save any misshapen pieces for fruit salad or other recipes!)

2. *Put it all together.*
Slice angel food cake. Top each slice with low-fat vanilla ice cream, frozen yogurt or fat-free whipped topping. Garnish with strawberry hearts. Add mint leaves or a little dark chocolate sauce, if you like.



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