

How-To: Acquire Your Basic Over-the-Counter Medication Needs In Ecuador

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Published on Gringo Tree URL at the end



Navigating your medical needs is always a challenge in a new country. Ecuador's health care system allows citizens and visitors alike to receive medications at the pharmacy with ease.

Two factors expedite the process of obtaining medication in Ecuador:

1. You do not need to see a doctor in order to receive medicines,
2. Regardless of whether you have insurance or not, you can go to any pharmacy, talk with the pharmacist, and they will dispense the medication immediately.

That's right: a doctor's note is not required and you do not need insurance.

Over-the-counter medications are very affordable and simple to acquire. You can walk into any pharmacy and explain to the pharmacist what pain or ailment you are dealing with, and they will prescribe the appropriate medication.

What is the Ecuadorian equivalent of my medicine?

The list below outlines the Ecuadorian brand name or generic name for the 12 most common over-the-counter needs. Use the chart to align your ailment or go-to brand with the Ecuadorian and generic equivalents.

| Pain (<i>Dolor</i>) or Ailment (<i>Enfermedad</i>) | U.S. Brand (<i>Marca de EE.UU</i>) | Generic Name (<i>Nombre Generico</i>) | Ecuadorian Brand (<i>Marca de Ecuador</i>) |
|---|---|--|---|
| Gas (<i>Gas</i>) | GAS X | Simethicone | Aero-Om (chewable, <i>masticable</i>) |
| Heartburn (<i>Acidez</i>) | Tagamet | Cimetidine | Acitip (chewable, <i>masticable</i>) |
| Antacid (<i>Neutralizador de</i> | Tums | Calcium Carbonate | Leche de Magnesia |

| | | | |
|---|--------------|---------------------|---|
| <i>Acidez</i> | | | |
| Diarrhea (<i>Diarrea</i>) | Imodium | Loperamide | Diaren, Nifuroxazida |
| Constipation (<i>Estrenimiento</i>) | Miralax | Polyethylene Glycol | Dulcolax |
| PMS Symptoms (<i>Sintoma Premenstrual</i>) | Mydol | Cramp tabs | Femen Forte, Duopas |
| Allergies (<i>Alergias</i>) | Zyrtec | Cetirizine | Alercet |
| Migraines (<i>Migrana</i>) | Excederin | Acetaminophen | Buprex Migra, Migradorixina |
| Congestion (<i>Congestion</i>) | Sudafed | Pseudoephedrine | Neogripal |
| Cough (<i>tos</i>) | Robitussin | Dextromethorphan | Tussolvin (syrup, <i>jarabe</i>), Atosyl (syrup, <i>jarabe</i>) |
| Runny Nose (<i>Nariz que Moquea</i>) | Benadryl | Diphenhydramine | Fluzetrim |
| Chronic Pain (<i>Dolor Cronico</i>) | Tylenol | Acetaminophen | Umbral |
| Chronic Pain (<i>Dolor Cronico</i>) | Advil/Motrin | Ibuprofen | Profinal |
| Chronic Pain (<i>Dolor Cronico</i>) | Naproxen | Naproxyn, Aleve | Febrax, Apronax, Flanax |
| Wounds (<i>Heridas</i>) | Neosporin | Bacitracin | Lamoderm (CRM) |

How do I ask the pharmacist for the right medication and dosage?

When you arrive to the pharmacy, you should be prepared to ask specific questions about the medicine, the quantity to be purchased, the dosage, and the side effects.

In Ecuador, the pharmacist will only give you the quantity of pills that *you* ask for, rather than giving you an entire box of the medication. Thus, you will be paying the cost per pill, not per package. You can request to purchase the whole box, but this is not customary. I would recommend bringing a piece of paper with you that states the following questions in Spanish. In doing so, the pharmacist can write down specific answers to your questions.

Questions to Ask the Pharmacist

I have ___ and I would like to buy the ___
medication.

Spanish Translation

*Tengo ___ y me gustaria comprar el
medicamento ____.*

**It is customary to request the medication with
its generic name or brand name.*

| | |
|--|--|
| How many pills would you recommend that I buy? | <i>Cual es la cantidad de pastillas que usted me recomendaría comprar?</i> |
| What is the dosage of this medication, or how many pills should I take each time? | <i>Cual es la dosificación o cuantas pastillas debo tomar a la vez?</i> |
| How often should I take each dose? How many times per day should I take this dose? | <i>Con qué frecuencia debo tomar cada dosificación? Cuántas veces debería tomar esa dosificación cada día?</i> |
| How many days should I continue taking this medication? | <i>Por cuantos días debería tomar esta medicación?</i> |
| Are there any side effects that I should be aware of or any food/activities that I should avoid? | <i>Debería saber de algunos efectos secundarios, o hay algunas actividades o comida que debería evitar?</i> |



Tips for Visits to the Fybeka Pharmacy

To improve the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of your pharmacy trips, keep the following tips in mind:

- If you are going to Fybeka, one of the main pharmacies in Cuenca, you should ask for a loyalty card or “Vital Card.” The card has no cost and can be acquired with a passport number or ID. The card keeps track of all of your purchases and can send you e-mail receipts. You will build up points with every purchase and will also be eligible for discounts and promotions.
- Four days per year Fybeka offers 20% all medications. These discount days occur within March, June, September and December. If you have the loyalty card (*Vital Card*) you will receive an email with the dates and details of the sale as the day approaches.
- Fybeka now has an English assistance program via telephone for all of its stores in Cuenca. You can call 098-800-1070 while at the pharmacy or from the comfort of your own home in order to speak with an English-speaking pharmacist. This program allows you to pre-order your prescriptions for pick up, or to have them delivered to your own home on the same day. If you live in the centro, there is no charge for delivery. If you live outside of centro, the delivery charge will be around \$2, depending on the distance.
- The pharmacies offer other great health-related services, such as immunizations and blood pressure measurements.

With a little bit of preparation you can be time and cost efficient in your pharmacy visits. Prepare with knowledge of the Spanish translation of your ailment and medication desires, the right questions to ask, and take the pharmacy visit tips into consideration.

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