



**Q:** Is Vicks VapoRub harmful?

**A: Yes.** It can be if used long term or if applied directly to the mucus membranes.

Vicks VapoRub

Active ingredients are camphor, menthol, and eucalyptus oil. The following information applies to both Vicks VapoRub and Vick's VapoInhaler. It can cause airway irritation leading to inflammation and increased mucus production. It is not intended for prolonged use and the packaging indicates to not use it for more than 7 days. The manufacturer and several other sources note that it may lead to rebound congestion if used longer. Thus, long term use may actually increase nasal congestion and continued use may lead to persistent congestion. It can actually perpetuate the problem rather than cure it.

None of the ingredients actually reduce congestion but menthol may give the sensation/feeling of coolness that some people perceive as an improvement in congestion. Studies do not find that Vicks actually reduces nasal congestion or improves respiratory status in any physically measurable way. Patients do often endorse the sensation of feeling of improved breathing, regardless. Studies indicated that it is a feeling and not an actual reduction in congestion. With prolonged use, the opposite actually can happen and Vicks Vaporub can actually CAUSE continued congestion, not relieve it.

The manufacture warns that Vicks VapoRub should not be applied in or near the nostrils.

Poison control and several studies warn against using Vicks directly in the nose. It can be absorbed through the mucus membranes and both camphor and menthol can have toxicity. There was a 2016 case study where an 85 year old woman had been using the medication in her nose for 50 years and developed a rare form of pneumonia (lipoid pneumonia) due to this practice. The ointment base in the Vicks contains petroleum jelly and is flammable.

Children that have ingested camphor can have seizures and die.

References:

[Vicks ® VapoRub ® \(nih.gov\)](#)

[Vicks VapoInhaler \(inhalant\) Procter & Gamble Manufacturing Company \(drugs.com\)](#)



[Menthol: Effects on nasal sensation of airflow and the drive to breathe | Current Allergy and Asthma Reports \(springer.com\)](#)

[Distinguishing science from pseudoscience in commercial respiratory interventions: an evidence-based guide for health and exercise professionals – PMC \(nih.gov\)](#)

**VICKS VAPORUB- camphor (synthetic), eucalyptus oil, and menthol ointment**  
**The Procter & Gamble Manufacturing Company**

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**Vicks<sup>®</sup> VapoRub<sup>®</sup>**

***Drug Facts***

**Active ingredients**

Camphor (synthetic) 4.8%

Eucalyptus oil 1.2%

Menthol 2.6%

**Active ingredients Purpose**

Cough suppressant & topical analgesic

Cough suppressant

Cough suppressant & topical analgesic

**Uses**

- when applied to chest and throat, temporarily relieves cough due to minor throat and bronchial irritation associated with the common cold
- when applied to muscles and joints, temporarily relieves minor aches and pains of muscles and joints

**Warnings**

**For external use only;** avoid contact with eyes.

**Do not use**

- by mouth
- in nostrils
- on wounds or damaged skin
- with tight bandages

**Ask a doctor before use if you have**

- cough that occurs with too much phlegm (mucus)
- persistent or chronic cough such as occurs with smoking, asthma or emphysema

**When using this product, do not**

- **heat**
- **microwave**
- **add to hot water or any container where heating water.**

**May cause splattering and result in burns.**

**Stop use and ask a doctor if**

- muscle aches and pains worsen or persist for more than 7 days or clear up and occur again within a few days.
- cough persists for more than 1 week, tends to recur, or is accompanied by fever, rash, or persistent headache. A persistent cough may be a sign of a serious condition.



Is Vicks VapoRub Harmful?

**TAMPER EVIDENT: Do not use if printed inhaler wrap is broken or missing.**

**VICKS**  
**VapoInhaler**<sup>TM</sup>  
 Levmetamfetamine...Nasal Decongestant

**FAST RELIEF FROM NASAL CONGESTION**

- Colds • Hay Fever
- Allergies

With Soothing Vicks Vapors

See Drug Facts

Net Wt. 0.007 OZ (204 mg)

Approximate Inhaler Location (F.P.O.)

**Drug Facts**

Active Ingredient (per Inhaler)	Purpose
Levmetamfetamine 50 mg	Nasal decongestant

**Uses** temporarily relieves nasal congestion due to:

- a cold
- hay fever or other upper respiratory allergies

**Warnings**

**When using this product**

- do not exceed recommended dosage
- temporary burning, stinging, sneezing, or increased nasal discharge may occur
- use of this container by more than one person may spread infection
- do not use for more than 7 days
- use only as directed
- frequent or prolonged use may cause nasal congestion to recur or worsen

**Stop use and ask a doctor if symptoms persist**

**If pregnant or breast-feeding**, ask a health professional before use.

**Keep out of reach of children.** If swallowed, get medical help or contact a Poison Control Center right away.

**Directions**

- the product delivers into each 800 ml of air 0.04 to 0.150 mg of levmetamfetamine
- do not use more often than every 2 hours

adults and children 12 years and over	2 inhalations in each nostril
children 6 to under 12 years (with adult supervision)	1 inhalation in each nostril
children 2 to under 6 years	ask a doctor
children under 2 years	do not use

**Other information**

- store at room temperature
- keep inhaler tightly closed
- this inhaler is effective for a minimum of 3 months after first use

**Inactive Ingredients**  
 bornyl acetate, camphor, lavender oil, menthol, methyl salicylate

**Questions?** 1-800-873-8276

**P&G**  
**80% GTIN**  
**VERSION A**  
**AREA GAUGE**  
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