- **Drug strength and form.** The amount of active drug (e.g., milligrams, micrograms, grains) is listed on the label, as is the form or unit of measure in which the active drug is contained (e.g., tablets, capsules, teaspoons, milliliters).
- **Route of administration.** This instruction explains how the patient is to take the medication. Most medication labels on drugs for parenteral use list the acceptable administration routes. For oral drugs, the common assumption is that a tablet will be given by mouth, and the oral route therefore is not listed.
- **Total quantity.** The quantity indicates the total amount of medication in the container in tablets, capsules, caplets, or milliliters. If the drug is in powder form, the quantity designation will identify the total medication weight in the package, as well as the total concentration and total number of milliliters in the package if reconstituted according to label instructions.
- **NDC number and lot number.** The NDC number assigned to each medication identifies the manufacturer, product, and size of the container. This information is listed on the label as NDC followed by a 10-digit number. The lot number links this package to a specific batch of drugs manufactured in a particular place over a given period of time. This information is important when a problem is found with a drug, such as contamination by a pesticide or other substance. The FDA can usually pinpoint the problem to a specific lot and can issue a recall for that lot number alone.

More contact information is available on the package insert in regard to the manufacturer as well as more detailed drug information than that included on the label or packaging.

Prescription drugs are not the only medications that include medication labels. OTC drugs, purchased without a prescription, also contain labels or instructions on drug use based on age and weight. The FDA has determined that, if the consumer takes an OTC medication as directed on the label, the drug is safe for the general population, although the medication may cause side effects, which are also listed on the label. As with prescription drugs, it is important for patients taking OTC drugs to read the label, including the dosage and any possible side effects. OTC drugs can interact negatively with prescription drugs. For example, some cold medicines increase the action of sedatives, so a person taking both medications would be sleepier than expected.

SUMMARY

- Medication orders take a variety of forms including handwritten or typed, verbal, or electronic directly to the pharmacy.
- Standing medication orders are used in specific routine circumstances such as diagnostic tests.
- Stop medication orders are given for a limited time. Stop orders cannot be refilled unless the prescriber renews it.
- Prescriptions must contain a set amount of information allowing the pharmacist to safely dispense medications to the patient. There are two types of information required. The administrative information includes the doctor's and patient's contact information as well as the physician's credentials and the patient's date of birth. The second type of information give specifics such as which drug is to be dispensed and in what quantity, strength, and form.
- Drug labels are required to provide information to allow patients to safely receive medications.
  - The manufacturer must provide information on the label and on a package insert to allow health-care providers to safely administer or dispense medications.
  - Pharmacists must translate information from the prescription and package labeling onto the medication label that they place on the bottle or other packaging they provide to the patient.
  - Medications that are kept as stock in the health-care facility must also have the manufacturer-provided information label to allow safe administration to patients in that facility.