

Help Prevent Medication Incidents

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What's In a Brand Name?

Manufacturers of over-the-counter medicines with well-known brand names may use those brand names in the names of other products. This can lead to confusion for consumers. A new product with a similar brand name may contain more ingredients than the original product. Sometimes, a product with a similar brand name contains an entirely different ingredient! This can lead to mistakes that may prevent consumers from getting the symptom relief they need. These mistakes can also cause unexpected side effects or even harm.

SafeMedicationUse.ca has received a report describing confusion between two Tylenol products. A consumer was about to take Tylenol Ultra Relief Migraine Pain for a headache, thinking that it contained only acetaminophen. Then the consumer read the label and realized that, in addition to acetaminophen, each Tylenol Ultra Relief Migraine Pain tablet contained 65 milligrams of caffeine. The consumer was worried about taking too much caffeine and did not take the medicine.

Last year, SafeMedicationUse.ca described confusion between Gravol and Gravol Natural Source. The original Gravol product contains the medicine dimenhydrinate. Gravol Natural Source contains ginger. SafeMedicationUse.ca received reports that consumers took Gravol Natural Source to relieve nausea, thinking it was the original Gravol product. Although none of the consumers experienced serious harm, they did not get the relief from nausea that they were expecting. [Read more](http://www.safemedicationuse.ca/alerts/alerts_gravol.html) (www.safemedicationuse.ca/alerts/alerts_gravol.html).

These reports show the importance of carefully reading the labels on over-the-counter medicines. Here are some tips to help prevent this type of mistake:

- Always read the label carefully, even if you have taken the medicine before.
- Check the active ingredients in the medicine, and the correct dose to take.
- Be especially careful if the package says “new” or if you notice that the package or the medicine inside the package looks different in any way. Remember, manufacturers sometimes use a well-known brand name in the name of other over-the-counter medicines.
- If you are uncertain about which medicine is the right one, ask your pharmacist for advice.