



Consumers Can Help Prevent
Harmful Medication Incidents

SafeMedicationUse.ca Newsletter

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Some Medications Don't Mix

Medications are supposed to make you better. However, when certain medications are taken together, serious side effects may occur. When this happens, it's called a drug interaction. The seriousness of the side effects from a drug interaction depends on the medications involved. Some drug interactions can even cause death if they are not caught quickly.

SafeMedicationUse.ca received a report of an incident involving an elderly consumer. The consumer had noticed some changes in her mental and physical health. A medication review showed that the consumer was taking 2 medications that may cause side effects when used together: citalopram (an antidepressant) and tramadol (a pain reliever). Her doctor stopped both medications safely, and the consumer recovered her mental abilities. Physically, her health did not recover and after this incident, she was no longer able to take care of herself.

SafeMedicationUse.ca has the following suggestions for consumers to help identify drug interactions and prevent harm:

- If you experience a **new symptom** or a **sudden change** in your health, ask your doctor if one or more of the medications you are already taking may be the cause.
- Use the **same pharmacy** to fill all of your prescriptions, so that your pharmacist can check for possible drug interactions.
- Ask your healthcare providers to **review your medications** on a regular basis. Many provinces in Canada offer medication review programs provided by pharmacists. Ask if you are eligible.
- Keep an **up-to-date** list of your medications and natural health products, and show it to your healthcare providers every time you receive care.

Read some additional tips in [Preventing Harm from Drug Interactions](http://www.safemedicationuse.ca/newsletter/newsletter_drug_interactions.html).
(www.safemedicationuse.ca/newsletter/newsletter_drug_interactions.html)

Read the [5 Questions to Ask about Your Medications](http://www.ismp-canada.org/medrec/5questions.htm) before each visit to a healthcare provider. (www.ismp-canada.org/medrec/5questions.htm)



Medication safety bulletins contribute to Global Patient Safety Alerts.

This newsletter was developed in collaboration with Best Medicines Coalition and Patients for Patient Safety Canada.

Recommendations are shared with healthcare providers, through the ISMP Canada Safety Bulletin, so that changes can be made together. This newsletter shares information about safe medication practices, is noncommercial, and is therefore exempt from Canadian anti-spam legislation.