



Consumers Can Help Prevent Harmful Medication Incidents

SafeMedicationUse.ca Newsletter

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Brand Name Extension: What Does It Mean?

Added letters or an abbreviation found after a brand name make up a "brand name extension". This extension shows that a change has been made to a product. The change could be in the strength of a medication, the number of ingredients, how you take it, or how often you take it.

ISMP Canada received a report from a consumer who was given Coversyl Plus instead of Coversyl Plus **HD** at the pharmacy. Both products contain the same two medications to treat blood pressure. However, the "HD" in Coversyl Plus HD means that this product contains a "higher dose" of both medications. The consumer noticed the mix-up after picking up a refill of her prescription. Luckily, there was no serious harm.

Abbreviations (such as "HD") can be easily misunderstood by healthcare providers and consumers alike. ISMP Canada tries to work with drug companies to reduce the use of these abbreviations and promote the use of [plain language](#) on product labels.



SafeMedicationUse.ca has the following suggestions to help consumers prevent mistakes with medications that share the same brand name, but have different extensions:

- Know the full name of the medications you are taking, including any extensions at the end of the name. Keep a detailed written medication list with you at all times.
- Ask your pharmacist to explain what the extension in your medication name means. If you know the meaning, it may be easier to remember the full name of your medication.
- Check your medications before taking them. Read each prescription label carefully for both the medication name and any extension. If the prescription is a refill, be sure the medication looks the same as before.

Read about additional examples of confusing brand name extensions in these newsletters: [Same Brand Name, Different Ingredients](#) and [What's in a Brand Name?](#)

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.