



Consumers Can Help Prevent Harmful Medication Incidents

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Natural Health Products—Improving Labels for Safety

Information on the label of a natural health product gives consumers important information that can help them decide whether the product is right for them. Information on the label also helps consumers to use the product properly and safely. Examples of natural health products include vitamins, herbal remedies, and traditional medicines.

A report of confusing labelling was shared with SafeMedicationUse.ca. A healthcare provider prescribed a daily dose of 1 mL of D-Vi-Sol, a liquid vitamin D product, for an infant. The mother was confused about the differences between the available vitamin D products and mistakenly bought Baby D Drops. Baby D Drops is more concentrated (400 units of the vitamin in every drop) than D-Vi-Sol (400 units in every millilitre). The infant received 1 mL of Baby D Drops daily, equal to 36 times the prescribed dose.

ISMP Canada completed an analysis of this case and more than 300 other reported errors involving the product labels of natural health products. The analysis identified 3 main areas of concern:

- confusing labelling of ingredients
- confusing labelling of dose
- warnings not easy to find

The findings from this analysis were supported by a short survey by [Patients for Patient Safety Canada](#). Most consumers who responded reported buying the wrong natural health product or over-the-counter medication at some time in the past. Reasons for buying the wrong product included:

- the information printed on the label was too small
- the product selected was confused with another product
- the information and warnings were unclear or confusing

Health Canada is introducing a *Plain Language Labelling Initiative* that will require manufacturers to:

- present information in a standardized format within a Product Facts table (like the Nutrition Facts table on food products);
- make the label easier to read by using a minimum font size; and
- use plain language that is easy to understand.

This work is an important step toward improving the safety of natural health products. For more information, see Health Canada's website: <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/self-care-framework.html>

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.