



Consumers Can Help Prevent  
Harmful Medication Incidents

## SafeMedicationUse.ca Newsletter

Volume 12 • Issue 4 • April 28, 2021

### Vitamins May Be Needed with Some Long-Term Medications

Some medications taken for many years can lower the amount of some nutrients and vitamins in the body. By being aware of these long-term side effects, early action can be taken to prevent future health problems.

SafeMedicationUse.ca received a report about a person who developed severe osteoporosis (a condition that can weaken bones) after taking the anti-seizure medication phenobarbital for more than 30 years. Long-term use of this medication can change the way the body uses vitamin D. Vitamin D is essential to help the body take up calcium, which is needed for strong bones. Because the person was not aware of this long-term side effect, they did not take any extra vitamin D or calcium. As a result, there was an increased risk of osteoporosis and bone fracture.

**To lower the risk of future health problems caused by loss of nutrients or vitamins, SafeMedicationUse.ca has the following tips to help people who are taking long-term medications:**

- Ask your pharmacist or health care provider about any long-term side effects of your medications.
- If you know that one of your medications can lower the level of nutrients and/or vitamins in your body, speak to your health care provider about what supplements you may need to take.
- Ask your health care provider if you need to have regular blood tests for early detection of side effects.



#### **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.