

Angeliq Drug Samples Mistakenly Provided as Birth Control

Angeliq is a hormone-based medicine used to relieve the symptoms of menopause, such as hot flashes. ISMP Canada has received 2 reports of Angeliq being confused for birth control pills. In each case, a doctor gave a woman some sample packets of Angeliq to take as birth control. Each of the women took Angeliq for several months until the samples were finished. In each case, the mistake was discovered when the woman took a prescription for a further supply of Angeliq to her community pharmacy. Angeliq is not suitable for birth control, so this type of mixup could result in an unplanned pregnancy.

Angeliq has a number of similarities to birth control pills that might have played a role in the mixups:

- The labelling and packaging of Angeliq is similar in design to the labelling and packaging of birth control pills (Figures 1 and 2). Also, Angeliq comes in a 28-day supply, just like many birth control pills.
- The hormones contained in Angeliq pills appear similar to the ingredients in birth control pills.*
- The term “Angeliq” sounds like a woman’s name and many birth control pills also have female-sounding names (for example, Alesse, Apri, Linessa, Portia, Yasmin, and Yaz).

In addition to these similarities to birth control pills, neither the outer nor the inner package of Angeliq has any information pointing out that the medicine is to be used for symptoms of menopause.

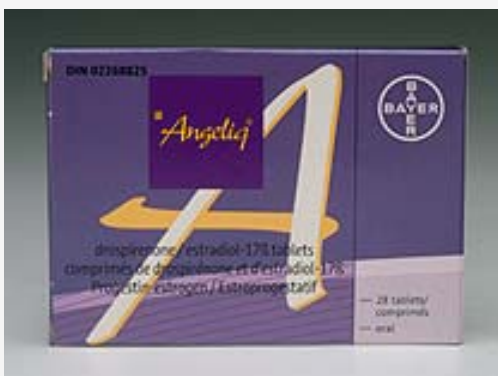


Figure 1: The front panel of the outer package for Angeliq.



Figure 2: The main panel of the inner package for Angeliq, along with the blister pack of tablets.

ISMP Canada is alerting healthcare professionals, consumers, the manufacturer, and others about the potential for confusion involving Angeliq.

When samples are provided in doctor's offices, certain checks that are usually provided by your pharmacy may be missed. If your doctor gives you sample medication for any reason, let your pharmacist know you are taking the medication, and why. Your pharmacist can add this information to your medication profile, and check that the sample medication does not interact with any medicines you are already taking. You should also ask your pharmacist to provide you with an information sheet about the medication, if available.

* Angeliq contains the progestin hormone called drospirenone and an estrogen known as estradiol-17 β . Birth controls also contain progestin and estrogen. However, the dose of progestin in Angeliq is less than that used in birth control pills, and the potency of the estrogen used in Angeliq is different from the potency used in birth control pills.