



WOMEN'S HEART FOUNDATION

presents

Medication Safety



Facts, Fiction & Fundamentals

*What everyone needs to know
when taking medicines and supplements*

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Medication Safety Week is April 1-7

FOCUS DAYS:

- 1. Clean out your medicine cabinet day**
- 2. Know your medicines awareness day**
- 3. Read medicine labels carefully awareness day**
- 4. Dietary supplements awareness day**
- 5. Organize your medicines awareness day**
- 6. Transitional care awareness day**
- 7. Better communication with health professionals awareness day**

The Women's Heart Foundation

Champions of prevention and wellness programs for improving women's survival and quality of life

The Women's Heart Foundation, the only non-governmental organization that implements demonstration projects for the prevention of heart disease, is a 501c3 charity dedicated to implementing wellness and gender-specific evidence-based medicine.

Founded 1986. Incorporated June 11, 1992

WHF Disclaimer

Discussion of herbs and supplements does not imply endorsement of their use.

What may be advocated for the general population may not be right for you.

Before considering taking a dietary supplement, consult with your primary care doctor or practitioner who can address your personal healthcare needs.

A message from Honorable Governor Christie Whitman



- *Use medicines wisely*
- *Read labels carefully*
- *Be careful when taking supplements*
- *Report side effects promptly*
- *Don't hesitate to ask any questions*

Medication Safety...

it's everyone's concern!



Defining the Problem

- The FDA estimates that 76.6 billion dollars is spent annually on preventable medication-related illnesses.
- 25% of all hospitalizations among the elderly are due to medication-related illnesses.
- 30-50% of people take their medicines incorrectly. Over 60% don't inform their doctors if using complementary medicine.
- Unsafe use of medicine affects survival and quality of life.

1998 Article in the Journal of American Medical Association

- 100,000 hospitalized patients in the U.S. die each year of adverse drug reactions.
- This problem is between the 4th and 6th leading cause of death.
- Another 2 million patients experienced serious reactions, causing permanent disability or resulting in death.
- These figures do not include less severe or outpatient reactions.

Goals of the Medication Safety Campaign

- Raise awareness about safety issues regarding use of medication and supplements.
- Offer specific strategies to reduce risk.
- Make everyone more comfortable discussing medicines and supplements.

Objectives of the Medication Safety Campaign

By the end of this program, participants will be able to:

- Complete a medication record.
- Fill a medication organizer box.
- Have a better understanding of generic drugs and supplements.

Definitions

- Generic drug: a drug that has the same active chemical ingredient as a “brand” name drug but usually costs less.
- Dietary Supplements: products that people use in addition to the foods they eat (e.g. vitamins, minerals, herbals, etc.).



3 Scenarios



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**“I didn’t tell
my doctor
I was taking
supplements
because she
would not
approve”**

*If you plan to use a supplement, discuss it
with your doctor or practitioner.*

**“I take
this little
white pill
for my
heart”**



Ask for both generic name and brand name for each pill prescribed to be written down on the instruction sheet. Ask the pharmacist to write on the medicine bottle both names and what the medicine is for.



**“My wife
thought
taking a
supplement
was safe
because it
was natural”**

Ephedra is a “natural” stimulant that can be deadly.

Ask your pharmacist...

- **For the printout sheet for each medicine that you take.**
- **For both the generic name and the brand name to be printed on the label.**

For example...

Captopril 12.5 mg.

Take 1 pill three times a day. For blood pressure
(Generic of Capoten)

Safety Rules When Taking Medicine

- **Make a list of your medicines. Include over-the-counter drugs, birth control pills, vitamins, herbals and other supplements.**
- **Keep the list updated.**
- **Keep the list with you at all times.**

More Safety Rules When Taking Medicine

- **Read labels carefully.**
- **Keep medicines organized and out of reach.**
- **Discuss use of a supplement with your primary care doctor or practitioner *before* starting it.**
- **If you have any questions – ask your practitioner or pharmacist.**

More Safety Rules When Taking Medicine

- **Be aware of possible side-effects.**
- **Report side-effects to your doctor or practitioner and pharmacist promptly.**
- **Store pills in their original containers and in a cool, dry area.**
- **Discard outdated pills.**

Double Check Your Medicine...

- **When picking up a new or refilled prescription.**
- **After a visit to your doctor.**
- **While in a hospital or nursing home.**
- **When being discharged from a hospital or nursing home.**



Part II

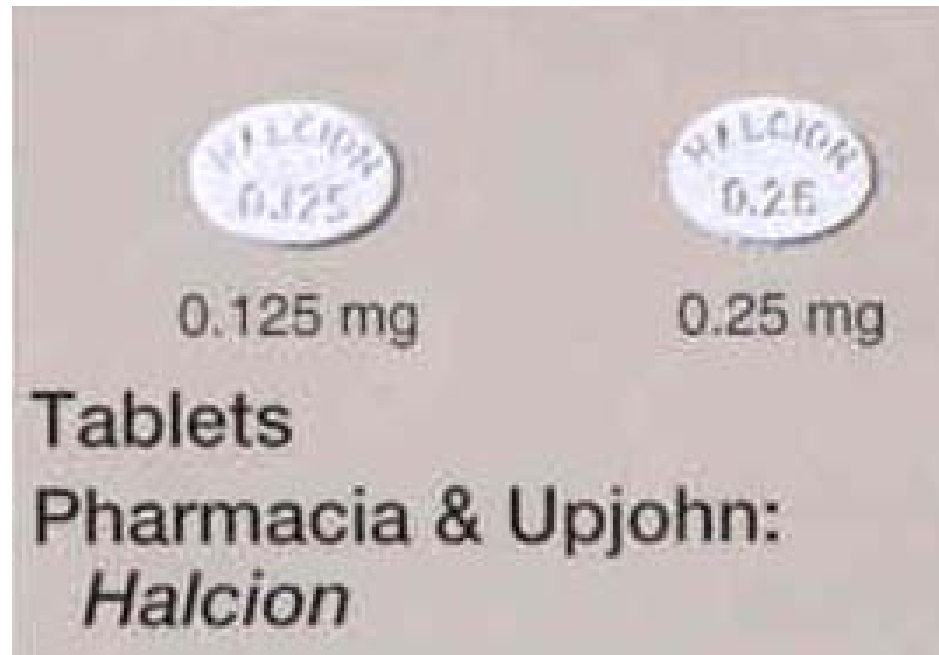
Medication Safety Alerts

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Medication Safety Alert

- **Beware of pills that Look Alike but are different.**
- **Beware of pills that Look Different but are alike (the same active ingredient in generic form) .**
- **Beware of medicines that Sound Alike but are different.**

Drugs That Look Alike But Are Different (*different dosages*)



Halcion®

Different doses that look the same



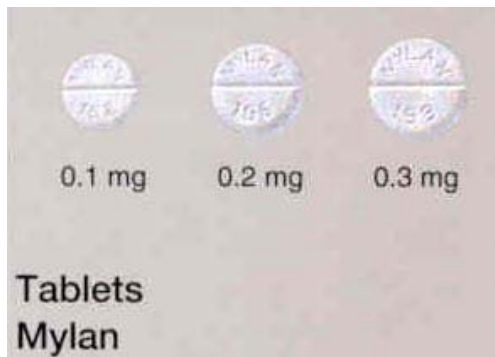
Arthrotec®

Different doses that look the same



Viagra®

Drugs that Look Alike but are Different (All are small white pills)



Clonidine
(lowers blood pressure)



Albuterol
(breathing pill)



Furosemide
(water pill)

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Drugs that Look Different but are Alike (*generic forms*)

All are **Clonidine** – a drug used to lower blood pressure



Note that the color order is different for each of the 4 manufacturers

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Drugs that Look Different but are Alike (*Generic forms*)

All are **Dexamethasone** - a corticosteroid

Decadron®



Dexamethasone



Note how shades of peach, purple and pink are harder to distinguish from one another.

Note the color order is different

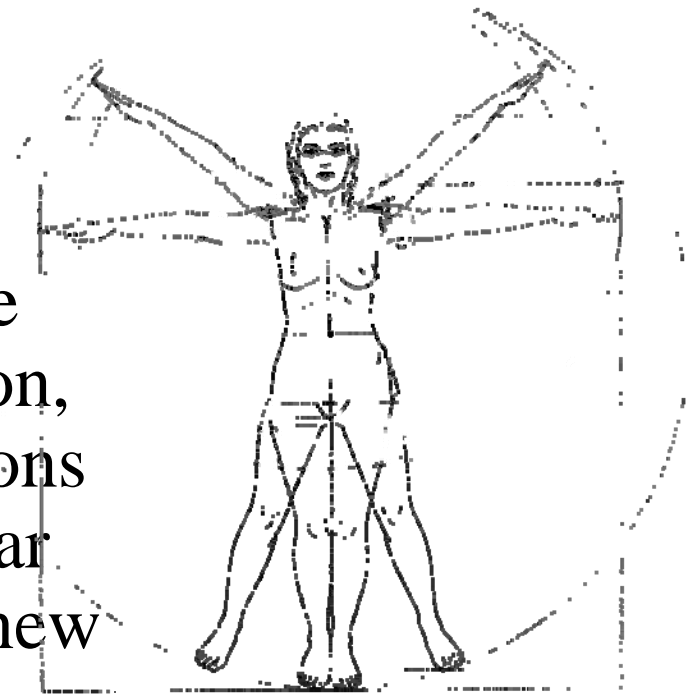
Drugs With Names That *Sound Alike*

- **Cerebyx - Celebrex - Celexa**
- **Hydroxyzine - Hydralazine**
- **Clonidine - Klonopin**
- **Xanax – Zantac**

Medication Safety Alert

Gender Differences

- Men and women are affected differently by medications.
- Although much is known about the way men react to certain medication, there are many unanswered questions as to how women respond to similar medicines. Research is providing new information.





Part III

Dietary Supplements and Medication Safety

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Megadosing

- **Can have a negative effect on health.**
- **As a general rule, don't exceed 300% of the Recommended Daily Allowance (RDA).**
- **Always check with your pharmacist.**

Are Vitamin Supplements Beneficial?

- B Vitamins (B-6 and Folate)
- Vitamin C
- Vitamin E

More study is needed

Commonly Used Herbal Supplements

- Black Cohash
- Chamomile
- Don Quai
- Echinacea
- Evening Primrose
- Feverfew
- Flaxseed / Flax Oil
- Garlic
- Ginger
- Gingo Biloba

Commonly Used Herbal Supplements

- Ginseng
- Gotu Kola
- Green Tea
- Kava Kava
- Peppermint
- Soy products
- St. John's Wort
- Valerian

Medication Safety Alert **If pregnant or breastfeeding...**



© USPC



© USPC

- Do **NOT** take Herbals while pregnant. Some Herbals can cause spontaneous abortion.
- Do **NOT** take Herbals while breastfeeding. Herbals can pass to the baby in breast milk.

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Medication Safety Alert

Beware of giving Herbals to children

- **Check with your child's pediatrician before considering any Herbal remedy for your child.**
- **Store medicine and herbals out of reach of children.**



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Medication Safety Alert

Do NOT take Herbals before surgery



- **Stop all Herbals 2-3 weeks before a scheduled surgery.**

per recommendation by the American Society of Anesthesiologists

Safety Rules if taking herbals

- **Communicate!** Studies show many patients don't tell their doctors when they're taking supplements, which can lead to problems.
- **Check with your practitioner *before* starting on supplements, especially if you are being treated for any medical conditions.**

Safety Rules if taking herbals

- **Avoid using Herbals if taking a medicine treating the same condition. “Double-dosing” can occur.**
- **Don’t assume that a supplement is safe just because it’s “natural”.**

Safety Rules if taking herbals

- **The long-term effects of supplements affecting brain metabolism are not known (*e.g. St. John's Wort, Melatonin*).**
- **Limit the use of these supplements to no more than 2-3 weeks.**

Medication Safety Alert

Herbals and Coumadin®

- **DO NOT USE** Herbals such as *feverfew, garlic, ginko, ginger, dong quai, ginseng*, or drink teas containing *coumarin* while taking Coumadin® (warfarin), as increased bleeding can be experienced.
- **Check with your doctor, prescribing practitioner or pharmacist for more information.**

Medication Safety Alert

St. John's Wort

- **It was recently reported that St. John's Wort not only hampers the effect of AIDS drugs but also causes similar problems with heart drugs and antibiotics.**
- **For a listing of interactions, go to *www.fda.gov/cder/drug/advisory/stjwort.htm***

Medication Safety Alert

Ginseng

- **DO NOT USE ginseng when taking estrogens or steroids because of possible additive effects.**

Medication Safety Alert

Ephedra Warning

- **The FDA issued a warning about Ephedra (a stimulant that increases metabolism and affects the cardiovascular system).**
- **Many deaths have been associated with its use.**

What is Synergy?

- **Synergy is the combination effect of chemicals that can yield a more potent reaction (e.g. alcohol + cold medication = drowsiness).**
- **Synergy gives cause for concern, especially when the cardiovascular system is affected.**
- **Use caution when taking medicines and supplements because combining them may produce unknown effects.**

Synergistic effects of medicines and herbals

- **Taking precautions with herbals and medicines can reduce risk, but an adverse reaction may still occur.**
- **Synergistic effects from mixing drugs and herbs are unpredictable.**
- **Individuals metabolize drugs differently.**



Part IV

Action Plan to improve healthcare communication; lower risk of medicine error

Complete your medication record

This Medication Record is for: _____

(please print all information)

last name, first name

Allergies:

No known drug allergies

#1 Pharmacy name and phone:

Name of Primary Care Doctor:

#2 Pharmacy name and phone:

Doctor's Phone:

start date	Name of Medicine (include strength - dose - frequency)	doctor:	Times to take				Purpose
			Morn	Noon	Eve	Bed	
	other name						
	other name						
	other name						
	other name						
	other name						

Benefits of keeping a Medication Record

- **Provides a quick way for health information to be shared. *In an emergency it could save your life!***
- **Makes it easier for consumers to ask questions about medicines and supplements.**

Medication Organizer Box



Photograph of medication box used with permission from Apex Medical Co.

Medication Organizer Box

PROS

- It's useful if taking more than one pill at different times of the day.
- It can help a disabled person be more independent with medicine-taking.

CONS

- It requires careful daily monitoring.
- Look-alike pills are placed together
- It should not be used with certain medicines – check with your pharmacist.

Communication is key...

- ✓ Make a list of your medicines and include over-the-counter drugs, birth control pills, vitamins, herbals and other supplements.
- ✓ Keep the list updated.
- ✓ Keep the list with you at all times.

Communication is key...

- ✓ Report adverse effects promptly.**
- ✓ Read labels carefully.**
- ✓ Be careful when taking supplements.**
- ✓ Always ask questions.**

Grateful Acknowledgment

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Christine Todd Whitman**

U.S. FDA Office of Women's Health

**New Jersey Hospital Association
New Jersey Pharmacists Association
Library Cooperative of New Jersey**

Resources... for more Information

- *Balch, J., MD & Balch, P., CNC, Prescription for Nutritional Healing, Avery Publishing Group, 2nd ed., '97*
- *The German Commission E Monographs from the American Botanical Council (check your local library)*
- *Graedon, J & Graedon, T, Dangerous Drug Interactions. The Peoples Pharmacy*
- *Somers, E, The Essential Guide to Vitamins and Minerals*
- *Tyler, V, The Honest Herbal, NY Pharmaceutic Product Press, '94*

Resources... for more Information

- Your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.
- The company that manufactures the product.

A **FREE Medication Record and Guide** is available through the Women's Heart Foundation pdf health library page at www.WomensHeart.org

Medication Safety Matters

Take Care of Your Heart



www.WomensHeart.org

Wellness Communities – Prevention – Gender care

