



Consumers Can Help Prevent Harmful Medication Incidents

SafeMedicationUse.ca Newsletter

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Calcium and Medications Often Don't Mix

Calcium is a mineral that is needed to keep bones and teeth healthy. Calcium is found naturally in dairy products (e.g., milk, cheese) and is added to some drinks (e.g., orange juice, soy milk). It is also available as a natural health product, either on its own (e.g., in the form of calcium carbonate or calcium citrate) or as part of other health products (e.g., multivitamins).

Calcium interacts with some medications when they are taken together. When this happens, neither the calcium nor the medication will work very well. To prevent this problem, any product or food containing calcium should be taken at different times from these medications.

SafeMedicationUse.ca received a report from a consumer who had prescriptions for two medications to treat an infection. The person took the medications at the same time as their calcium supplement. The consumer had not been told to take one of the medications separate from calcium products to avoid an interaction. It was later found that the infection was not properly treated.



SafeMedicationUse.ca has the following tips to avoid interactions with natural health products and medications:

- Keep your medication list updated with all prescription, nonprescription, and natural health products. Be sure to include any vitamins and minerals that you take, such as calcium. Show this list to every health care provider, especially before starting a new medication or natural health product.
- Talk to your pharmacist about every new medication that you start. Ask if there are any foods, drinks, natural health products, or other products that you should avoid.
- When buying a natural health product, always ask the pharmacist whether it is safe to take with your current medications.

Read some additional tips on avoiding drug interactions in [Some Medications Don't Mix](https://www.safemedicationuse.ca/newsletter/newsletter_DrugInteractions.html).
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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.