

May 2019 ~ Resource #350531

## Look-Alike/Sound-Alike Medications

Confusion between similar drug names is an important cause of medication errors.<sup>1,2,5</sup> Poor handwriting, similar product labeling, and unfamiliarity with drug names or new products are some of the factors that contribute to this problem.<sup>5</sup> Some strategies pharmacies can consider to reduce drug name mix-ups include implementation of technology (e.g., bar-code scanning, computer alerts), use of auxiliary labels, use of tall man lettering, separating products on shelves, and reading back orders.<sup>2,3</sup> Prescribers can help reduce look-alike/sound-alike errors by writing prescriptions clearly, not using abbreviations, and by including the indication for the medication on the prescription.<sup>1,2,4</sup> Familiarizing yourself with potential problem drugs can also aid in the recognition and prevention of an error.<sup>2,5</sup> Below is a listing of some of the more common or problematic look-alike/sound-alike drug names (*brand names are italicized*).

For a listing of confusing drug name pairs involved in med errors go to <http://www.ismp.org/tools/confuseddrugnames.pdf>. (Please note that the Joint Commission website no longer maintains a list of look-alike/sound-alike drug names. They now direct viewers to the ISMP list.) ISMP also has a list of look-alike drug names with recommended tall man lettering at <https://www.ismp.org/recommendations/tall-man-letters-list>.

\* These two drug names are easily confused when poorly written.

### Examples of Look-Alike and/or Sound-Alike Drug Names

*Accutane and Accolate, Accupril*  
*Acetazolamide and Acetaminophen*  
*Aciphex and Accupril*  
*Actonel and Actos*  
*Adderall and Inderal*  
*Advicor and Advair*  
*Allegra and Viagra*  
*Anzemet and Avandamet*  
*Aricept and Aciphex*  
*Aripiprazole and Rabeprazole*  
*Asacol and Os-Cal*  
*Atomoxetine and Atorvastatin*  
*Avandia and Coumadin\**  
*Avandia and Prandin*  
*Avinza and Evista*

*Azathioprine and Azithromycin*  
*Azilect and Aricept*  
*Bicillin C-R and Bicillin L-A*  
*Bisoprolol and Bisacodyl*  
*Brintellix and Brilinta*  
*Bupropion and Buspirone*  
*Carafate and Cafergot*  
*Carboplatin and Cisplatin*  
*Cataflam and Catapres*  
*Celebrex and Celexa, Cerebyx*  
*Clonidine and Klonopin*  
*Codeine and Cardene*  
*Coumadin and Cardura*  
*Depakote and Depakote ER*  
*DiaBeta and Zebeta*

*Dexamethasone and Dexmedetomidine*  
*Diazepam and Diltiazem, Ditropan*  
*Diflucan and Diprivan*  
*Dobutamine and Dopamine*  
*Duloxetine and Paroxetine*  
*Epinephrine and Ephedrine*  
*Farxiga and Fetzima*  
*Femara and Femhrt*  
*Fluocinolone and Fluocinonide*  
*Folic Acid and Folinic Acid*  
*Foradil and Toradol*  
*Glipizide and Glyburide*  
*Haldol and Stadol*  
*Humalog and Humulin, Humalog Mix, Novolog*

*More . . .*

Hydralazine and Hydroxyzine  
Hydrocodone and Oxycodone  
*Invega* and *Intuniv*  
*Keppra* and *Kaletra*, *Keflex*  
Labetalol and Lamotrigine  
*Lamisil* and *Lamictal*  
Lamivudine and Lamotrigine  
*Lanoxin* and Levothyroxine  
*Lasix* and *Losec* (Canada)  
*Lexiva* and *Levitra*  
Lithium and *Ultram*\*  
Lorazepam and Alprazolam  
*Lotensin* and Lovastatin  
*Lovenox* and *Levoxyl*  
*Malarone* and Mefloquine  
Melatonin and *Mellaril*  
Metformin and Metronidazole  
Methadone and Methylphenidate,  
Metolazone  
Methocarbamol and Methotrexate  
Morphine SO<sub>4</sub> (MSO<sub>4</sub>) and Magnesium  
SO<sub>4</sub> (MgSO<sub>4</sub>)  
*Mucinex* and *Mucomyst*

*Myfortic* and *Myrbetriq*  
*Narcan* and *Norcuron*  
*Neutra-Phos-K* and *K-Phos Neutral*  
Nicardipine and Nifedipine and Nimodipine  
*Nolvadex* and *Norvasc*  
*Novolog* and *Novolin*  
Opium Tincture (deodorized) and Paregoric  
(camphorated opium tincture)  
Oxybutynin and Oxycodone  
*OxyContin* and *MS Contin*  
*OxyContin* and Oxycodone  
*Plavix* and *Paxil*  
*Plavix* and *Pradaxa*  
Prednisolone and Prednisone  
*Prilosec* and *Prozac*  
*Prograf* and *Proscar*, *Prozac*  
Ranitidine and Rimantadine  
Rifampin and Rifaximin  
*Risperdal* and Ropinirole  
*Razadyne* and *Rozerem*  
*Retrovir* and Ritonavir  
*Rituxan* and *Rituxan Hycela*  
*Singulair* and *Sinequan*

Tacrolimus and Tamsulosin  
*Taxol* and *Taxotere*  
*Tenex* and *Xanax*  
Tiagabine and Tizanidine  
*Toprol XL* and *Tegretol-XR*,  
*Tegretol*, *Topamax*  
*TNKase* and *Activase*  
Tramadol and Trazodone  
*Valtrex* and *Valcyte*  
Valsartan and Verapamil  
Vinblastine and Vincristine  
*Volumen* and *Voluven*  
*Wellbutrin SR* and *Wellbutrin XL*  
*Yasmin* and *Yaz*  
*Zantac* and *Xanax*, *Zyrtec*  
*Zestril* and *Zyprexa*  
*Zetia* and *Zebeta*, *Zestril*  
*Zocor* and *Zyrtec*  
*Zyrtec* and *Zyprexa*  
*Zyvox* and *Zovirax*

*More. . .*

Users of this resource are cautioned to use their own professional judgment and consult any other necessary or appropriate sources prior to making clinical judgments based on the content of this document. Our editors have researched the information with input from experts, government agencies, and national organizations. Information and internet links in this article were current as of the date of publication.

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### References

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**Cite this document as follows:** Clinical Resource, *Look-Alike/Sound-Alike Medications. Pharmacist's Letter/Prescriber's Letter. May 2019.*

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