



THE SAFE USE OF MEDICATION SAMPLES

Have you ever received a sample of a prescription medication from your physician? Did you take the sample to your pharmacy to ask about the medication before you started to use it? If not, you may have been putting your personal safety at risk.

The practise of physicians providing samples of medications poses many problems including:

- 1) **The pharmacist has been removed from the equation.** This means no pharmacist will check if the new medication is safe for the patient, or if it interacts with any current medications (including over-the-counter supplements and vitamins). Without seeing a pharmacist, patients are rarely counseled on how to take the medication, its efficacy, and potential side effects. **This presents a safety risk for you.**
- 2) **Samples raise healthcare costs by promoting the use of expensive products.** Samples are generally for the newest, and therefore the most expensive, medications on the market. Drug companies provide these medications as samples to doctors in hopes that patients will end up taking them long term. Expensive samples are started, even when cheaper and equally effective alternatives are available. **This increases healthcare costs for both the government (when a government sponsored plan is involved) and the patient.**
- 3) **The sample medication may not be covered.** Many patients find they can't afford the new medication after the sample runs out, and then must be switched to yet another drug that is covered. **This creates unnecessary switching of medications, and can lead to some negative effects to the patient's care.**

The best thing that you can do for your health if you receive a sample of a medication is take it directly to your pharmacy. Why take your sample to the pharmacy if you already have the medication? The answer: to make sure it is safe and effective. Here is why you should visit your pharmacy after receiving a medication sample:

- To have the pharmacist check to see that the sample medication does not interact with any of the medications, supplements, or herbal remedies that you are currently taking
- To determine how much the medication costs, and if it will be covered by your insurance plan. If it isn't covered, and you can't afford it, you probably shouldn't start taking it
- If the pharmacist feels it is not safe, or if you cannot afford the medication, a recommendation will be made to your doctor for a safer or more affordable alternative
- The pharmacist will educate you on how to take the medication, how it works, how long it will take to work, and any side effects that you need to be aware of.

Whenever you are in doubt or have questions about a medication, **ask your pharmacist!** **Pharmacists are medication experts** and will make certain the medication is safe for you!

STAFFORD PHARMACY: POLICY CHANGES

As of July 1st, 2013, the pharmacy department at Stafford Pharmacy and Home Healthcare will be implementing some changes that will affect our patients. In doing so we have tried to talk with each patient that will be affected by the changes; however we know we have missed some of you. The changes include:

- 1) The billing of compounded medications to drug plans. Beginning **July 1, 2013** we will no longer submit the majority of compounded prescriptions for electronic submission to any drug plan on your behalf. This means in most instances you will have to pay cash and submit the receipt for reimbursement. **We have a 2 page handout explaining why this is changing and how it affects you. If you have compounded medications and have not received a copy of this, please ask us for one and we will be happy to answer any remaining questions.**
- 2) The copayment that those with Alberta School Board drug coverage must pay. For those clients that have **Alberta School Employee Benefit Plans (ASEBP)** which currently is administered and adjudicated by the **Alberta Blue Cross program**, your prescriptions will be subject to the **charges as of July 1st, 2013. We have a 2 page handout explaining the how and the why of these changes. If you have not received one, please ask us for a copy and we will be happy to answer any questions.**
- 3) The fee charged for the service of having a pharmacist administer an injection for you that is not covered by Alberta Health. Until now, **the fee to have an immunization** such as a travel injection was \$15. This will increase to \$20, consistent with Alberta Health's current fee schedule for injections. Injections covered by Alberta Health, including flu vaccinations, and Vitamin B12 injections will continue to be provided free of charge to patients as Alberta Health does cover these injection services.

For more information on any of the above changes please speak with a member of our pharmacy team today, we are always willing and available to help!

BRAND SPOTLIGHT: SISU

Stafford Pharmacy is proud to carry the premium vitamin and supplement line SiSu (pronounced see-sue). SiSu is a **Canadian brand**, headquartered in Burnaby, B.C. is GMP (Good Manufacturing Practises) certified - every product approved by Health Canada.



SiSu offers a wide range of products from single ingredient vitamins, such as Vitamin D and Vitamin B12, to combination products including multivitamins. One of our most popular SiSu products is **Supreme Multivitamin 50+**. This multivitamin is in the form of a capsule making it easier to swallow. This multivitamin is also a **Vitamin D and Coenzyme Q10 supplement all-in-one**. Daily dose is 2 capsules; Supreme Multivitamin 50+ contains 1000 IU of Vitamin D, 100 mg of Coenzyme Q10, and many more!! This represents current dosing recommendations.

If you are looking for a quality vitamin product, consider trying the SiSu brand and see if you notice the difference Canadian quality makes!

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