



Non informative brand names sometimes hide combinations of several drugs

Peter is at the pharmacy:

– Hi, I've been coughing and feel feverish. I'd like a box of Migralgine^o capsules and some Neo-Codion^o syrup please.

– You know that Migralgine^o contains paracetamol, caffeine and codeine, and that Neo-Codion^o syrup also contains codeine. If you use both of these products you might be taking too much codeine. Generally it's best to take one well-chosen drug at an effective dose, rather than several different drugs. That way you reduce the risk of side effects. I recommend you simply take paracetamol and codeine syrup. Be careful if you have to drive, though.

– But how can I know if a product contains one or several drugs? You can't tell from the large-print name on the box.

– True, many capsules, tablets, syrups and so on contain two or more different drugs, yet you often can't tell this from their brand names! What you should do is to examine the box for the INN (the International Nonproprietary Name). Each active drug substance has its own INN, so if a product contains several drugs you will see several INNs. Thanks to the INN system you can always know precisely what a product contains.

With the INN system you know exactly what drug(s) you're taking!

The INN (International Nonproprietary Name) is quite simply a drug's real name. Created by the World Health Organization (WHO), the INN system is used throughout the world. It allows healthcare professionals and patients to identify a drug precisely and with confidence, and to avoid potentially serious adverse effects due to confusion between drugs. With the INN, everything is simpler, clearer and more precise.

Ask your doctor and pharmacist to explain the INN system



"The INN campaign: a drug's real name": explanations and other materials produced by the Medicines in Europe Forum are available from the following websites:

– Association Mieux Prescrire (www.prescrire.org)

– Fédération Nationale de la Mutualité Française (www.mutualite.fr)

– Union Fédérale des Consommateurs Que Choisir (www.quechoisir.org)

The INN, a drug's real name: leaflets are available to download for free at www.prescrire.org, along with explanations of the reasons for using the INN and the (rare) drawbacks.