

# What's in a brand name?

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When doctors prescribe drugs by their brand names they can confidently expect that their patients will be given particular compounds by the pharmacist. For example, if they prescribe Brufen they can be confident that the pharmacist will dispense a formulation that contains ibuprofen.

When patients buy drugs over the counter, however, matters may be more complicated. For example, if they buy tablets with the name Anadin on the box they may be buying a formulation that contains aspirin and caffeine; aspirin, caffeine, and quinine; aspirin, caffeine, and paracetamol; paracetamol alone; or even ibuprofen alone. Of course, these different

formulations may have slightly different names, such as Anadin Extra for aspirin plus caffeine plus paracetamol and Anadin Paracetamol for paracetamol alone; but it takes a high degree of awareness to realise, for example, that one of these contains aspirin while the other does not. In another example Aspro Paraclear contains paracetamol and not aspirin whereas Aspro Clear contains aspirin and not paracetamol.

There are several similar examples of brand name drugs that are available over the counter under the same or closely similar names but that contain different drugs or combinations of drugs. The table lists these—both formulations for oral use and formulations for topical use—culled from an issue of *Chemist and Druggist*.<sup>1</sup> This list is by no means comprehensive. For example, I have omitted formulations for which differences are limited to what might be regarded as inactive excipients, such as sodium citrate in effervescent formulations. I have also omitted examples in

Over the counter formulations of medicines with the same brand name containing different ingredients

Brand name	Formulation	Contents	Brand name	Formulation	Contents
<i>Oral formulations</i>					
Actifed	Compound linctus	Tripolidine, pseudoephedrine, dextromethorphan HBr	De Witt's† De Witt's*	Analgic pills Antacid powders	Paracetamol, caffeine Magnesium trisilicate, light magnesium carbonate, calcium carbonate, sodium bicarbonate, light kaolin, peppermint oil
Actifed	Expectorant	Tripolidine, pseudoephedrine, guaiphenesin			
Actifed	Syrup and tablets	Tripolidine, pseudoephedrine			
Aller-eze	Tablets	Clemastine hydrogen fumarate	De Witt's*	Antacid tablets	Calcium carbonate, magnesium carbonate, magnesium trisilicate, peppermint oil, lactose
Aller-eze Plus	Tablets	Clemastine, phenylpropanolamine			
Altacite	Suspension and tablets	Hydrotalcite			
Altacite Plus†	Suspension and tablets	Dimethicone, hydrotalcite	De Witt's* De Witt's*	Kidney and bladder pills Lozenges	Extract of buchu, extract of uva ursi Tyrothricin, benzocaine, cetylpyridinium chloride
Aludrox*	Liquid	Aluminium hydroxide			
Aludrox*	Tablets	Aluminium hydroxide, magnesium carbonate, magnesium hydroxide			
Anadin	Capsules	Aspirin, caffeine	Dimotane	Elixir	Brompheniramine maleate
Anadin*	Tablets (soluble)	Aspirin, caffeine	Dimotane Plus	Elixir, paediatric elixir	Brompheniramine maleate, pseudoephedrine HCl
Anadin†	Tablets	Aspirin, caffeine, quinine sulphate			
Anadin Extra†	Tablets (soluble)	Aspirin, caffeine, paracetamol	Dimotane	Tablets	Brompheniramine maleate
Anadin Ibuprofen	Tablets	Ibuprofen	Dimotane LA	Tablets	Brompheniramine maleate
Anadin Paracetamol†	Tablets	Paracetamol	Dimotane Plus LA	Tablets	Brompheniramine maleate, pseudoephedrine HCl
Andrews*	Tablets	Calcium carbonate, magnesium carbonate			
Andrews*	Tablets	Sodium bicarbonate, citric acid, magnesium sulphate hydrate	Dimotane	Expectorant	Brompheniramine maleate, guaiphenesin, phenylephrine HCl, phenylpropanolamine HCl
Andrews Answer*	Sachets	Paracetamol, caffeine, sodium bicarbonate, citric acid			
Asilone*	Liquid, suspension	Dimethicone, aluminium hydroxide, magnesium oxide	Dimotane Co	Liquid (adult and paediatric)	Brompheniramine maleate, pseudoephedrine HCl, codeine phosphate
Asilone*	Tablets	Dimethicone, aluminium hydroxide, sucrose			
Aspro†	Tablets	Aspirin	Diocalm	Tablets	Morphine HCl, atropine
Aspro Clear†	Tablets	Aspirin	Diocalm Junior	Sachets	Morphine HCl, atropine
Aspro Paraclear*	Tablets	Paracetamol	Diocalm Ultra	Capsules	Morphine HCl, atropine
Beechams*	Pills	Aloin	Disprin†	Tablets	Loperamide
Beechams	Tablets	Aspirin	Disprin CV	Tablets	Aspirin
Beechams†	Powders	Aspirin, caffeine	Disprin Direct*	Tablets	Aspirin, glycine
Beechams*	Powder capsules	Paracetamol, caffeine, phenylephrine HCl	Disprin Extra*	Tablets	Aspirin, paracetamol
Beechams†	Tablets	Aspirin, caffeine	Expulin	Cough linctus	Pholcodine, pseudoephedrine HCl, chlorpheniramine maleate
Beechams*	"Hot lemon"	Paracetamol, ascorbic acid, phenylephrine HCl	Expulin	Linctus (dry cough)	Pholcodine
Beecham Coughcaps	Capsules	Dextromethorphan HBr	Expulin	Paediatric linctus	Pholcodine, chlorpheniramine maleate
Benylin	Liquid (chesty cough)	Diphenhydramine HCl, menthol	Famel*	Expectorant	Guaiphenesin
Benylin	Liquid (dry cough)	Diphenhydramine HCl, dextromethorphan HBr, menthol	Famel	Linctus	Pholcodine
Benylin	Liquid (mentholated)	Diphenhydramine HCl, dextromethorphan HBr, pseudoephedrine HCl, menthol	Famel	"Original"	Creosote, codeine phosphate
Benylin	Liquid (non-drowsy)	Guaiphenesin, menthol	Fedril	Expectorant	Diphenhydramine HCl, ammonium chloride, menthol
Benylin	Liquid (non-drowsy, dry cough)	Dextromethorphan HBr	Fedril	Expectorant (paediatric)	Diphenhydramine HCl, menthol
Benylin	Liquid (paediatric)	Diphenhydramine HCl, menthol		Liquid (tickly cough)	Cetyl pyridinium chloride, ipecacuanha, lemon oil, honey, ammonium chloride, glycerin, citric acid
Benylin	Liquid (with codeine)	Diphenhydramine HCl, codeine, sodium citrate, menthol	Fennings† Fennings*	Powders (children's) Gripe mixture	Paracetamol Sodium bicarbonate, peppermint oil, dill oil, caraway oil
Benylin Day and Night	Tablets	Paracetamol, phenylpropanolamine HCl (day tablets); Paracetamol, diphenhydramine HCl (night tablets)	Fennings* Fennings* Flurex	Lemon mix "Little healers" Liquid ("bedtime")	Sodium salicylate Ipecacuanha Paracetamol, diphenhydramine HCl, pseudoephedrine
Bisodol*	Powders	Heavy magnesium carbonate, light magnesium carbonate, sodium bicarbonate	Flurex	Liquid ("hot lemon")	Codeine phosphate, ephedrine HCl, diphenhydramine HCl
Bisodol*	Tablets	Calcium carbonate, light magnesium carbonate, sodium bicarbonate	Flurex	Capsules	Paracetamol, phenylephrine HCl
Bisodol Extra*	Tablets	Calcium carbonate, light magnesium carbonate, sodium bicarbonate, simethicone	Flurex*	Tablets	Paracetamol, phenylephrine HCl, caffeine
Bradosol*	Lozenges	Benzalkonium chloride	Franolyn Expect	Liquid (chesty cough)	Ephedrine, guaiphenesin, theophylline
Bradosol Plus	Lozenges	Domiphen bromide, lignocaine HCl	Franolyn SED	Liquid (dry cough)	Dextromethorphan HBr
Bronalin	Liquid (decongestant)	Pseudoephedrine HCl	Galfer	Capsules, syrup	Ferrous fumarate
Bronalin	Liquid (dry cough)	Dextromethorphan HBr, pseudoephedrine HCl, alcohol	Galfer FA	Capsules	Ferrous fumarate, folic acid
Bronalin	Liquid (expectorant)	Diphenhydramine HCl, sodium citrate, ammonium chloride	Galpseud	Linctus, tablets	Pseudoephedrine HCl
Bronalin	Liquid (expectorant paediatric)	Diphenhydramine HCl, sodium citrate	Galpseud Plus	Linctus	Pseudoephedrine HCl, chlorpheniramine maleate
Coldrex*	Powders	Paracetamol, phenylephrine HCl, ascorbic acid			
Coldrex*	Tablets	Paracetamol, phenylephrine HCl, caffeine, terpin hydrate, ascorbic acid	Gaviscon	Liquid	Sodium alginate, sodium bicarbonate, calcium carbonate
Collis Browne's	Mixture	Morphine anhydrous, peppermint oil	Gaviscon/ Gaviscon 250	Tablets	Alginate acid, sodium bicarbonate, aluminium hydroxide, magnesium trisilicate
Collis Browne's	Tablets	Light kaolin, morphine HCl, heavy calcium carbonate	Gaviscon	Sachets (infant)	Sodium alginate, magnesium alginate, aluminium hydroxide
			Lem-Plus* Lem-Plus* Lemsip*	Capsules Powders Capsules	Paracetamol, caffeine, phenylephrine HCl Paracetamol, ascorbic acid Paracetamol, anhydrous caffeine, phenylephrine
			Lemsip	Liquid ("night time")	Paracetamol, dextromethorphan HBr, chlorpheniramine maleate, phenylpropanolamine HCl

Brand name	Formulation	Contents	Brand name	Formulation	Contents
Mac*	Lozenges	Amylmetacresol, menthol, sucrose, glucose	Gelcotar	Gel	Coal tar, pine tar
Mac Extra*	Lozenges	Hexylresorcinol	Gelcotar*	Shampoo	Coal tar, cade oil
Meltus*	Liquid (baby)	Acetic acid	Germolene*	Cream	Chlorhexidine gluconate, phenol
Meltus	Liquid (dry cough)	Dextromethorphan HBr, pseudoephedrine HCl, alcohol	Germolene*	Ointment	Anhydrous lanolin, yellow and white soft paraffins, light liquid paraffin, starch, zinc oxide, methyl salicylate, octaphonium chloride, phenol
Meltus*	Liquid (adult/junior expectorant)	Guaiphenesin, cetylpyridinium chloride, honey	Germolene*	Spray	Triclosan, dichlorophen
Meltus*	Liquid ("honey and lemon")	Guaiphenesin, honey, glycerin	Germolene*	Wipes	Benzalkonium chloride, chlorhexidine gluconate
Mu-Cron	Syrup	Phenylpropranolamine HCl, ipecacuanha	Germoloids*	Cream, ointment	Zinc oxide, lignocaine HCl
Mu-Cron	Tablets	Phenylpropranolamine HCl, paracetamol	Germoloids*	Suppositories	Lignocaine HCl, zinc oxide
Normacol*	Sachets	Sterculia	Germoloids*	Wipes	Chlorhexidine gluconate, benzalkonium chloride, menthol
Normacol Plus*	Granules, sachets	Sterculia, frangula	Hydromol*	Emollient bath additive	Liquid paraffin, isopropyl myristate
Nutrizym 10/22*	Capsules	Pancreatin	Hydromol*	Cream	Arachis oil, isopropyl myristate, liquid paraffin, sodium pyrrolidone carboxylate, sodium lactate
Nutrizym GR*	Capsules	Pancreatin, lipase, protease, amylase	Lacto calamine	Cream	Calamine, zinc oxide, zinc carbonate, hamamelis water
Rennie*	Tablets	Calcium carbonate, magnesium carbonate	Lacto calamine*	Lotion	Calamine, hamamelis water, phenol, zinc oxide
Rennie Gold*	Tablets	Calcium carbonate	Lana-sting	Cream	Benzyl alcohol, lignocaine
Robitussin	Liquid (cough soother)	Dextromethorphan	Lana-sting	Spray	Benzocaine, benzethonium chloride
Robitussin	Expectorant	Guaiphenesin	Mycil*	Footspray	Tolnaftate
Robitussin Plus	Expectorant	Guaiphenesin, pseudoephedrine HCl	Mycil*	Ointment	Tolnaftate, benzalkonium chloride
Sudafed	Expectorant	Pseudoephedrine HCl	Mycil*	Powder	Chlorhexidine HCl, tolinaftate
Sudafed	Expectorant	Guaiphenesin, pseudoephedrine HCl	Mycota*	Cream, powder	Zinc undecanoate, undecanoic acid
Sudafed	Linctus	Dextromethorphan HBr, pseudoephedrine HCl	Mycota*	Spray	Undecanoic acid, dichlorophen
Sudafed	Tablets	Pseudoephedrine HCl	Oilatum*	Cream	Arachis oil, povidone iodine
Sudafed Plus	Syrup, tablets	Triprolidine HCl, pseudoephedrine HCl	Oilatum*	Emollient	Liquid paraffin, acetylated wool alcohols
Sudafed-Co	Tablets	Paracetamol, pseudoephedrine HCl	Oilatum*	Gel	Light liquid paraffin
Tixilyl Cough and Cold	Linctus	Pseudoephedrine HCl, chlorpheniramine maleate, pholcodine	Phytocil	Cream	Phenoxypropanol, chlorophenoxyethanol, salicylic acid, menthol
Tixilyl Daytime	Linctus	Pholcodine	Phytocil	Powder	Phenoxypropanol, chlorophenoxyethanol, zinc undecanoate
Tixilyl Night-time	Linctus	Promethazine HCl, pholcodine	Quinoderm	Cream, gel	Potassium hydroxyquinoline sulphate, benzoyl peroxide
Ulcaid*	Gel	Lignocaine HCl, ethyl alcohol, cetylpyridinium chloride	Quinoderm*	Face wash	Chlorhexidine gluconate, cetrimide, sodium N-lauroyl sacosinate, lauric diethanolamide
Ulcaid	Tablets	Tyrothricin, benzocaine, cetylpyridinium chloride	Ralgex*	Cream	Methyl nicotinate, capscin
Venos*	Liquid (dry cough)	Glucose, treacle, aniseed oil, capsicum, camphor	Ralgex*	Spray	Glycol monosalicylate, ethyl salicylate, methyl salicylate, methyl nicotinate
Venos*	Liquid (expectorant)	Guaiphenesin, glucose, treacle, aniseed oil, capsicum, camphor	Ralgex*	Stick	Glycol salicylate, ethyl salicylate, methyl salicylate, capscin, menthol
Venos*	Liquid ("honey/lemon")	Lemon juice, honey, glucose	Ralgex*	Low odour spray	Glycol monosalicylate, methyl nicotinate
		<i>Topical formulations</i>	Ralgex*	Freeze spray	Isopentane, methoxymethane, glycol monosalicylate
Biactol*	Face wash ("regular skin")	Sodium lauryl ether sulphate, phenoxypropanol	Savlon*	Liquid	Chlorhexidine gluconate, cetrimide
Biactol	Face wash ("sensitive skin")	Phenoxypropanol	Savlon*	Nappy rash cream	Dimethicone, cetrimide
Brolene	Eyedrops	Propamidine isethionate, benzalkonium chloride, phenylethanol	Savlon*	Antiseptic cream	Cetrimide, chlorhexidine gluconate
Brolene	Ointment	Dibromopropamidine isethionate	Spectraban 4	Lotion	Isoamyl dimethylaminobenzoate
Cupal	Cold sore lotion	Povidone iodine	Spectraban 10	Lotion	Oxybenzone, 2-ethylhexyl-p-methoxycinnamate
Cupal*	Cold sore ointment	Diperodon HCl	Spectraban 15	Lotion	Isoamyl dimethylaminobenzoate
Cupal	Corn solvent	Salicylic acid	Spectraban Ultra	Lotion	Padimate (isoamyl dimethylaminobenzoate), butyl methoxy dibenzoyl methane, oxybenzone, titanium dioxide
Cupal	Insect bite cream	Antazoline HCl	Steripod	Liquid (wound cleanser)	Sodium chloride
Cupal*	Nail bite cream	Bitrex, turpentine oil, menthol, eucalyptus oil, allantoin, camphor, zinc oxide	Steripod	Liquid (wound/burns cleanser)	Chlorhexidine gluconate, cetrimide
Cupal	Verruca treatment	Salicylic acid	Steripod	Liquid (antimicrobial)	Chlorhexidine gluconate
Cupal	Wart solvent	Glacial acetic acid	Ster-Zac	Powder	Hexachlorophane
Dettol*	Mouth wash	Cetylpyridinium chloride	Ster-Zac	Liquid (skin cleanser)	Hexachlorophane
Dettol*	Cream	Chloroxylenol, triclosan, edetic acid	Ster-Zac*	Liquid (bath concentrate)	Triclosan
Dettol*	Liquid	Chloroxylenol	Ster-Zac	Shaving foam	Triclosan
Dettol	Fresh antiseptic disinfectant	Benzalkonium chloride	Throaties*	Linctus	Glycerol, honey, citric acid
Dettol*	Soap	Trichlorocarbaniide	Throaties*	Linctus (child)	Acetic acid, ipecac liquid extract
Diprobase*	Cream	Chlorocresol	Valderma*	Cream	Potassium hydroxyquinoline sulphate, chlorocresol
Diprobase*	Ointment	Liquid paraffin, white soft paraffin	Valderma*	Soap	Trichlorocarbaniide
Eludril*	Mouthwash	Chlorhexidine digluconate, chlorbutol hemihydrate			
Eludril	Spray	Chlorhexidine digluconate, amethocaine HCl			
Fiery Jack*	Cream	Glycol salicylate, diethylamine salicylate, capsicum oleoresin, methyl nicotinate			
Fiery Jack*	Ointment	Capsicum oleoresin			

\*Formulations on General Sales List.

†Formulations for which some pack sizes or formulations are on General Sales List.  
HCl=hydrochloride, HBr=hydrobromide.

which a difference between formulations arises because the formulations are intended for different uses and would be unlikely to be confused—for example, ointments versus tablets.

### Confusion may have important consequences

I know of no similar differences in prescription only medicines (although different formulations of the same brand name product may contain different doses or have different release characteristics). Even if there were such differences it would be up to the prescribing doctor to make clear on his or her prescription which formulation was required. The patient cannot be expected to be so discriminatory, and confusion among formulations is possible. This might be important, for example, in cases of allergy to certain components of some formulations (especially with medicines used on the skin) or for patients with asthma induced by salicylate, who might not be aware that a particular formulation contains a salicylate.

Confusion may also arise in cases of self poisoning. An example of this recently came to the attention of the drug and therapeutics committee of Oxfordshire Health Authority. A young woman took an overdose of Anadin. Thinking that all formulations of Anadin contain aspirin, the admitting doctor measured the plasma concentration of salicylate and found none. The patient was subsequently found to have taken Anadin Paracetamol, which contains paracetamol and not aspirin.

Differences among formulations with the same or similar names are likely to be most important for formulations that are subject to control under the Medicines (General Sales List) Order 1977 and can be bought without a pharmacist being present. These are indicated in the table. Doctors should be aware of these differences among over the counter formulations with the same or similar names.

1 Monthly price list. *Chemist and Druggist* 1993;34:(9).

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