

## WISE DIETARY SUPPLEMENTS USE

Choose a supplement brand that follows Good Manufacturing Practices (GMPs). Think about the harms and benefits of using the supplement. Use the label information to contact the product's company. Ask them questions about the



supplement. Share what you learn with healthcare providers. Report all harmful effects from dietary supplements to the Food & Drug Administration (FDA). Visit their MedWatch web site at: [www.fda.gov/medwatch](http://www.fda.gov/medwatch) or telephone their toll-free number at 800/332-1088.

### References

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S U P P L E M E N T S E N S E



Many people take dietary supplements. These supplements contain ingredients such as vitamins, minerals or herbs. They are taken to supplement the diet by increasing dietary intake. Supplements can not replace a well balanced diet of whole foods.

Many companies that market supplements may have done studies only in test tubes. Some supplements may interact with medicines, recreational drugs, and alcohol. For instance, St. John's Wort taken with antiretroviral drugs makes the antiretrovirals much less effective.

This tip sheet helps people learn about dietary supplements.

## USING SUPPLEMENTS

Many supplements have ingredients with strong effects. They may not be safe for all users. For instance, some herbs can either lower or raise blood sugar levels. Discuss dietary supplements with a health care provider or doctor. This helps to avoid harmful side effects, especially before surgery.

Know about false product claims when choosing a dietary supplement. The product may not do what it states on the label. It may or may not contain what the label states. Illegal products are spotted by the claims made on their label or in sale ads. Accusing health care providers, drug companies and government of holding back information on an illegal product is common.



## SIGNS OF FRAUD

Some signs of false product claims

- ☞ sounds too good to be true such as the product is a "breakthrough" or "miracle cure"
- ☞ label claims are vague and hard to measure such as "detoxify," "purify", and "energize"
- ☞ label claims that say the product is proven by scientific studies. The studies could be poorly designed. If references are given they cannot be traced or are out-of-date.

## CHOOSING SUPPLEMENTS

When choosing a dietary supplement there are a few things to think about. Dietary supplements are not tested to be sure they are safe. Poor habits when making them may cause differences between batches or products. Dietary supplements may be inferior or contaminated. Do not buy supplements from serve yourself bulk sources. If everyone has access to the bins it increases the odds of getting contaminated supplements. Follow these tips:

- Check with your doctor, pharmacist or a nutritionist **before** taking any dietary supplements.
- Buy only single-herb products that show how much of the herb each dose has.
- Do not buy herbs from bulk sources such as serve yourself bins.
- Store supplements in a dry, cool place out of the sight and reach of children.

## LABEL INFORMATION

- Check the listed ingredients and the product's expiration date.
- Remember, "natural" does not mean that a product is safe.
- Choose a brand that meets the standards of USP (US Pharmacopeia), NF (National Formulary) and/or ConsumerLab.