



DayInDayOut

WELCOA'S ONLINE BULLETIN FOR YOUR LIFESTYLE

Do You Know Enough About Dietary Supplements?

The majority of adults in the United States take one or more dietary supplements either every day or occasionally. Today's dietary supplements include vitamins, minerals, herbals and botanicals, amino acids, enzymes, and many other products. Dietary supplements come in a variety of forms: traditional tablets, capsules, and powders, as well as drinks and energy bars. Popular supplements include vitamins D and E; minerals like calcium and iron; herbs such as echinacea and garlic; and specialty products like glucosamine, probiotics, and fish oils.

The Dietary Supplement Label

All products labeled as a dietary supplement carry a Supplement Facts panel that lists the contents, amount of active ingredients per serving, and other

added ingredients (like fillers, binders, and flavorings). The manufacturer suggests the serving size, but you or your health care provider might decide that a different amount is more appropriate for you.

Effectiveness

If you don't eat a nutritious variety of foods, some supplements might help you get adequate amounts of essential nutrients. However, supplements can't take the place of the variety of foods that are important to a healthy diet.

Scientific evidence shows that some dietary supplements are beneficial for overall health and for managing some health conditions. For example, calcium and vitamin D are important for keeping bones strong and reducing bone loss; folic acid decreases the risk of certain birth defects; and omega-3 fatty

acids from fish oils might help some people with heart disease. Other supplements need more study to determine their value. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) does not determine whether dietary supplements are effective before they are marketed.

Safety and Risk

Many supplements contain active ingredients that can have strong effects in the body. Always be alert to the possibility of unexpected side effects, especially when taking a new product.

Supplements are most likely to cause side effects or harm when people take them instead of prescribed medicines or when people take many supplements in combination. Some supplements can increase the risk of bleeding or, if a person takes them before or after

BEFORE TAKING A DIETARY SUPPLEMENT, ASK YOURSELF THESE QUESTIONS:



What are the potential health benefits of this dietary supplement product?

What are its potential benefits for me? Does this product have any safety risks?

What is the proper dose to take? How, when, and for how long should I take it?

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surgery, they can affect the person's response to anesthesia. Dietary supplements can also interact with certain prescription drugs in ways that might cause problems.

Quality

Dietary supplements are complex products. The FDA has established quality standards for dietary supplements to help ensure their identity, purity, strength, and composition. These standards are designed to prevent the inclusion of the wrong ingredient, the addition of too much or too little of an ingredient, the possibility of contamination, and the improper packaging and labeling of a product. The FDA periodically inspects facilities that manufacture dietary supplements.

In addition, several independent organizations offer quality testing and allow products that pass these tests to display their seals of approval. These seals of approval provide assurance that the product was properly manufactured, contains the ingredients listed on the label, and does not contain harmful levels of contaminants. These seals of approval do not guarantee that a product is safe or effective. Organizations that offer this quality testing include:

- › U.S. Pharmacopeia
- › ConsumerLab.com
- › NSF International

Keep in Mind

- › Don't decide to take dietary supplements to treat a health condition that you have diagnosed yourself, without consulting a health care provider.
- › Don't take supplements in place of, or in combination with, prescribed medications without your health care provider's approval.



- › Check with your health care provider about the supplements you take if you are scheduled to have any type of surgical procedure.
- › The term "natural" doesn't always mean safe. A supplement's safety depends on many things, such as its chemical makeup, how it works in the body, how it is prepared, and the dose used. Certain herbs (for example, comfrey and kava) can harm the liver.
- › Before taking a dietary supplement, ask yourself these questions:
 - » What are the potential health benefits of this dietary supplement product?
 - » What are its potential benefits for me?
 - » Does this product have any safety risks?
 - » What is the proper dose to take?
 - » How, when, and for how long should I take it?

If you don't know the answers to these questions, use the information sources listed in this brochure and talk to your health care providers.