



Dietary Supplement Fact Sheet

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What is a dietary supplement?

- Any product intended to supplement the diet, which contains at least one of these ingredients: *vitamins, minerals, herbs or other botanicals, amino acids, metabolites, or combinations of these ingredients.*
- Usually taken in pill, capsule, tablet, or liquid form.
- Labeled as "dietary supplement"
- Not for use as the sole item of a meal or diet.

Do I need a dietary supplement?

If any of the below apply to you, ask your Physician or Registered Dietitian about taking a supplement:

- your busy lifestyle keeps you from eating the recommended number of servings from the food guide pyramid; (Refer to <http://outreach.missouri.edu/hes/fn/pyramid>)
- you are on a very low-calorie weight loss diet (<1200 calories daily);
- you are elderly and not eating as much as you should;
- you are a strict vegetarian;
- you can't drink milk or eat cheese and yogurt;
- you are a woman of childbearing age who doesn't eat enough fruits, vegetables, beans, and grains;
- you are pregnant or lactating.

How are dietary supplements regulated?

Loosely. Under the 1994 Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act (DSHEA):

- Marketers are responsible for making sure that their product is safe, and any claims about their products are true.
- All ingredients must be listed on the label.
- Dietary supplements are not regulated for safety or effectiveness before going to market, and do not need Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approval prior to sale.
- FDA monitors safety after the product has been marketed; to file a complaint about a dietary supplement, go to: <http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/hclaims.html>.

Bottom Line:

- Get nutrients from foods first. Foods contain many helpful compounds that are not present in supplements. Besides, who wants to swallow a pill when you can eat delicious, nutritious foods?
- Because dietary supplements are not tested for safety and effectiveness before going to market, some may not contain the ingredients stated on the label.

For more information contact:

www.consumerlab.com
www.fda.gov
www.quackwatch.com