



BETTERSAFE

WELCOA'S ONLINE BULLETIN FOR YOUR FAMILY'S SAFETY

SUPPLEMENT SAFETY

Now more than ever, you may be looking to all possible avenues to protect and enhance your health. Handwashing, mask-wearing and other protective measures have become the norm as we continue to fight the pandemic. And as we continue to keep a tight focus on our health, many may be asking what else can we do? For many, turning to dietary supplements is an easy and convenient option. But is that a good option to consider? Here's what you need to know.

Dietary supplements include ingredients like vitamins, minerals, herbs, amino acids, and enzymes. Some of the most common supplements that people take are calcium, vitamin D, ginseng, fish oil, and echinacea, just to name a few. Most supplements are available in various forms including tablets, capsules, soft gels, gel caps, powders, and liquids. Some supplements can help ensure you get enough of the vital substances the body needs to function, but should not replace a healthy diet. Aim to get the nutrition, vitamins, and minerals your body needs from whole foods.

ARE SUPPLEMENTS SAFE?

Many supplements are indeed safe, but it's important to note that **the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) does not review dietary supplement products for safety and effectiveness before they are marketed.** Rather, the manufacturers and distributors of dietary supplements are responsible for making sure their products are safe before they go to market.

Manufacturers are required to produce dietary supplements in a quality manner and ensure that



they do not contain contaminants or impurities and are accurately labeled according to current labeling regulations. The FDA can take dietary supplements off the market if they are found to be unsafe or if the claims on the products are false and misleading.

When deciding to take supplements, it is important to know that many contain active ingredients that can have strong biological effects in the body. This could make them unsafe in some situations and hurt or complicate your health. You should consult your doctor if you're considering or doing any of the following:

- » Combining supplements
- » Using supplements with medicines (whether prescription or over-the-counter)
- » Substituting supplements for prescription medicines
- » Taking more than the recommended dosage (especially vitamin A, vitamin D, or iron)

BE SUPPLEMENT SAVVY

If you want to know more about the product that you are taking, check with the manufacturer or distributor—dietary supplement labels must include name and location information for the manufacturer or distributor.

Additionally, you should keep these tips and information in mind:

- » Do your research. Don't rely on the product's site or label for everything. Go to reputable sites like the FDA to find the facts.
- » Remember that if claims sound too good to be true, they probably are. Be mindful of product claims such as “works better than [a prescription drug],” “totally safe,” or has “no side effects.”
- » Be aware that the term *natural* doesn't always mean *safe*.

Ask your healthcare provider if the supplement you're considering would be safe and beneficial for you. Unlike drugs, supplements are not permitted to be marketed for the purpose of treating, diagnosing, preventing, or curing diseases. That means supplements should not make disease claims, such as “lowers high cholesterol” or “treats heart disease.” Claims like these cannot be legitimately made for dietary supplements.

