

FDA's Advice on Dietary Supplements

How to spot a fraudulent product:

- ?? Claims that the product is a secret cure and use of such terms as "breakthrough," "magical," "miracle cure," and "new discovery." If the product were a cure for a serious disease, it would be widely reported in the media and used by health-care professionals, he says.
- ?? "Pseudomedical" jargon, such as "detoxify," "purify" and "energize" to describe a product's effects. These claims are vague and hard to measure. So, they make it easier for success to be claimed even though nothing has actually been accomplished.
- ?? Claims that the product can cure a wide range of unrelated diseases. No product can do that.
- ?? Claims that a product is backed by scientific studies, but with no list of references or references that are inadequate. For instance, if a list of references is provided, the citations cannot be traced, or if they are traceable, the studies are out-of-date, irrelevant, or poorly designed.
- ?? Claims that the supplement has only benefits--and no side effects. A product potent enough to help people will be potent enough to cause side effects.
- ?? Accusations that the medical profession, drug companies and the government are suppressing information about a particular treatment. It would be illogical for large numbers of people to withhold information about potential medical therapies when they or their families and friends might one day benefit from them.

To ensure that you get a quality product, you should:

- ?? Look for ingredients in products with the U.S.P. notation, which indicates the manufacturer followed standards established by the U.S. Pharmacopoeia.
- ?? Realize that the label term "natural" doesn't guarantee that a product is safe. "Think of poisonous mushrooms," says Elizabeth Yetley, Ph.D., director of FDA's Office of Special Nutritionals. "They're natural."
- ?? Consider the name of the manufacturer or distributor. Supplements made by a nationally known food and drug manufacturer, for example, have likely been made under tight controls because these companies already have in place manufacturing standards for their other products.
- ?? Write to the supplement manufacturer for more information. Ask the company about the conditions under which its products were made.

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