

Fact-Check Your Influencer: Dietary Supplements

Soghra Jarvandi, Associate Professor
Jessica Taylor, Extension Specialist
Community Health Leadership Team



FactCheck Your Influencer: Dietary Supplements

What Are Dietary Supplements?

Dietary supplements are products like vitamins, minerals and herbs. They come in many forms, such as powders, pills or drinks. Some examples are vitamin D, multivitamins, calcium, echinacea and fish oil (omega3 fatty acids).



What Are the Benefits of Dietary Supplements?

Some supplements can support your health when you take them the way a doctor or other healthcare professional recommends. However, supplements should not replace eating nutrient-rich whole foods.

What Are the Risks of Dietary Supplements?

Dietary supplements can sometimes cause harmful side effects. Unlike medicines, supplements do not need approval from the Food and Drug Administration before they are sold. This means companies do not have to prove their products are safe or effective. Before taking a supplement, it is important to look for research-based information about its safety.

Important Tips



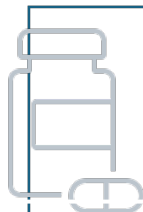
“Natural” does not always mean “safe.”

For example, the herb Ashwagandha may harm the liver.



Supplements may be contaminated.

For example, some weight loss supplements have been found to contain unsafe ingredients not listed on the label.



Supplements can be harmful on their own or can interact with medications or other supplements.

For example, St. John’s wort can make some medicines, like birth control pills, less effective. It can also dangerously increase the effects of other medicines, such as antidepressants.



Look for supplements with a trusted third party certifications seal on the label.

Third party testing verifies that the supplement contains the ingredient(s) listed on the label. Examples of third party organizations are U.S. Pharmacopeia (USP) and NSF.

Bottomline:

Tell your health care provider about any dietary supplements you take.

Ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist if you have any questions about supplements.

Where Can I Find Good, Research-Based Information about Dietary Supplements?

[Dietary Supplement Fact Sheets](#) from National Institutes of Health provide reliable information about many common dietary supplements.

Disclaimer:

This fact sheet is for education only and is not medical advice. Talk to your healthcare provider about what is safe for you.

Resources

[5 Tips: What Consumers Need To Know about Dietary Supplements](#)

(National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health)

[FDA 101: Dietary Supplements](#) (Food and Drug Administration)

[Questions and Answers on Dietary Supplements](#) (Food and Drug Administration)

Authors:

Soghra Jarvandi, Associate Professor

Jessica Taylor, Extension Specialist Community Health Leadership Team



UTIA.TENNESSEE.EDU

Real. Life. Solutions.™