

Guide to Credible Food, Supplement, & Alternative Medicine Information

When you are seeking information on the potential medical/health benefits of a food, supplement, or alternative form of medicine, first see the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) website as a credible source of the latest information at <http://nccam.nih.gov>.

When considering supplement use, always ask for more information. If necessary, contact the manufacturer for more information about the specific product that you are purchasing. "Promoters of legitimate healthcare products do not object to you seeking additional information."⁶ If you cannot tell



whether the product you are purchasing meets the same standards as those used in the research studies you read about, ask to speak to someone who can address your questions, some of which may include:

- What information does the firm have to substantiate the claims made for the product? Be aware that sometimes firms supply so-called "proof" of their claims by citing undocumented reports from satisfied consumers, or "internal" graphs and charts that could be mistaken for evidence-based research.
- Does the firm have information to share about tests it has conducted on the safety or efficacy of the ingredients in the product?
- Does the firm have a quality-control system in place to determine if the product actually contains what is stated on the label and is free of contaminants?

- Has the firm received any adverse events reports from consumers using their products?¹¹

Talk with your doctor, dietician, or pharmacist. Some dietary supplements may interact with prescription and over-the-counter drugs, have unwanted effects during surgery, or have other serious adverse effects that need to be reported to the FDA (by phone at 1-800-FDA-1088 or online at <http://www.fda.gov/medwatch/how.htm>).



For other credible sites addressing your food and dietary supplement needs, see:

- the USDA Food & Nutrition Information Center's website for dietary guidance: http://fnic.nal.usda.gov/nal_display/index.php?info_center=4&tax_level=1&tax_subject=256
- the USDA Food & Nutrition Information Center's website for dietary supplements: http://fnic.nal.usda.gov/nal_display/index.php?info_center=4&tax_level=1&tax_subject=274
- the International Bibliographic Information on Dietary Supplements (IBIDS) database at http://dietary-supplements.info.nih.gov/Health_Information/IBIDS.aspx
- the Institute of Medicine's Dietary Reference Intake Tables (a complete listing of the nutrients you need based on age and gender categories) at <http://www.iom.edu?id=21377>

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