



Nutri-Facts: Dietary Supplements

What are Dietary Supplements?

The Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act defines dietary supplements as a product (other than tobacco) intended to supplement the diet that contains one or more of the following dietary ingredients: a vitamin, mineral, amino acid, herb or other botanical; or a dietary substance for use to supplement the diet by increasing the total dietary intake; or a concentrate, metabolite, constituent, extract, or combination of any ingredient described above; and intended for ingestion in the form of a capsule, powder, soft gel, or gel cap, and not represented as a conventional food or as a sole item of a meal or the diet.

Should I take Dietary Supplements?

Active duty, reserves, family and retired military members may take dietary supplements to lose weight, build muscle and improve performance, increase energy and improve health. Purchases of dietary supplements have increased greatly due to marketing and advertising by supplement manufacturers who use consumer dollars for increased awareness and purchasing power rather than product research and good manufacturing practices. Over 1,000 new dietary supplements are added annually to the already 29,000 available.

How safe are Dietary Supplements?

1. As a consumer, you need information you can trust to help make thoughtful decisions about eating a healthful diet and using dietary supplements.
2. Many members of the U.S. military have had serious problems stemming from dehydration, seizures, disorientation, migraine headaches and even death as a result of dietary supplement use. Safety is a major concern since the Food and Drug Administration does not consider standards of practice and manufacturers can put unproven claims on packaging.
3. Recent laboratory tests of 27 types of multivitamins have again demonstrated the worrisome fact that many packages of dietary supplements on store shelves don't contain what their labels say. The tests, conducted by Consumer Labs, a research and publishing firm that performs independent testing of supplements for the industry and consumers, assigned 9 of the 27 products with a failing grade. This means they failed either to contain the labeled ingredients in the amounts described or failed related tests of disintegration and purity.

For specific information on a Dietary Supplement and supplement safety, go to the Human Performance Resource Center at: <http://humanperformanceresourcecenter.org/>



Are there any guidelines for using dietary supplements?

Using product labels and the internet to make decisions about supplements is risky. There are independent labs and companies that have tested Dietary Supplements to determine if they meet manufacturer standards of quality, purity and potency. Look for one of these four symbols on supplement labels. These indicate good manufacturing practices and identify products that meet specific standards.



Is there any supplement that is recommended for maintaining health?

A multi-vitamin with minerals may be beneficial in ensuring that important nutrients are being taken daily. As an example, a multi-vitamin may contain folic acid, an important B vitamin that prevents birth defects and heart disease. When selecting a multi-vitamin, select one with no more than 100% of the recommended daily intake for vitamins and minerals. This ensures safety and avoids spending extra money on supplements that may not be worth the cost.

Where can I get more information?

Human Performance Resources Center (Operation Supplement Safety)
<http://hprc-online.org/dietary-supplements>



National Institutes of Health: Office of Dietary Supplements
<http://dietary-supplements.info.nih.gov/>

Food and Drug Administration
<http://www.fda.gov/Food/DietarySupplements/default.htm>

For more information on this and other health and wellness topics, visit the
Navy & Marine Corps Public Health Center (NMCPHC) at:
<http://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcphc/health-promotion/Pages/default.aspx>